Жития Святых

THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS

set forth in Russian according to the guidance of the Chet'i-Minei of

OUR FATHER AMONG THE SAINTS

St. Dimitri

Metropolitan of Rostov

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Book IV

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THE FIRST DAY OF APRIL

April 1

1 апреля

New Calendar April 1 · Old Calendar April 14 (civil dates)

Life of Our Venerable Mother Mary of Egypt

Житие преподобной матери нашей Марии Египетской

"It is good to keep close the secret of a king, but it is honourable to reveal and declare the works of God" (Tob. 12:7). So said the Archangel Raphael to Tobit, when the wondrous healing of his blindness had taken place. Indeed, not to keep the king's secret is dreadful and ruinous, and to be silent about the glorious works of God is a great loss for the soul. "And I," says St. Sophronius, who wrote the Life of the Venerable Mary of Egypt, "fear to conceal the divine works by silence, and, remembering the calamity that threatened the servant (Mt. 25:18, 25) who buried in the earth the talent given him by God, I cannot but relate the holy narrative that has come down to me. And let no one think," continues St. Sophronius, "that I have presumed to write what is untrue, should any doubt arise concerning this wondrous event: it is not fitting for me to lie about holy things. If, however, there are people who, having read this writing and been struck by the glorious event, do not believe, may the Lord be merciful to them, for they, reflecting on the weakness of the human creature, consider impossible those wonderful deeds which are accomplished through holy people. But it is now time to begin the account of the glorious event that took place in our race."

In one of the monasteries of Palestine there lived an elder adorned with a pious life and with wise speech, who from early youth had valiantly striven in the monastic ascetic labour. The elder's name was Zosimas. (Let no one suppose that this is the heretic Zosimas, although they share one name: the one earned an evil reputation and was alien to

the Church, the other was righteous and was glorified.) Zosimas passed through all the degrees of ascetic labours and observed all the rules handed down by the greatest monks. In doing all this he never ceased to instruct himself with divine words: both lying down and rising, both at work and when partaking of food (if only what he partook of in very small quantity can be called food), he ceaselessly and constantly performed one task: he sang divine hymns and sought instruction in the divine books. Even in infancy he had been given to a monastery, where he valiantly laboured in asceticism until the age of fifty-three. But then the thought began to trouble him that he had attained complete perfection and no longer needed any guidance.

"Is there," he thought, "on earth a monk who could instruct me and show me an example of such asceticism as I have not yet passed through? Will there be found in the desert a man who has surpassed me?"

As the elder pondered thus, an Angel appeared to him and said:

"Zosimas! You have laboured zealously, as far as human strength allows, and valiantly passed through the ascetic struggle. Yet there is no man who could say of himself that he has attained perfection. There are labours unknown to you, and more difficult than those you have passed. To learn how many other paths lead to salvation, leave your country, as the most glorious of the patriarchs Abraham did (Gen. 12:1), and go to the monastery that lies by the river Jordan."

Following this instruction, Zosimas went out of the monastery in which he had laboured from infancy, set off to the Jordan, and reached that monastery to which the voice of God had directed him.

Pushing the monastery gates with his hand, Zosimas found a monk-doorkeeper and told him about himself. The latter informed the abbot, who ordered the arriving elder to be called to him. Zosimas came to the abbot and performed the customary monastic bow and prayer.

"Whence are you, brother," the abbot asked him, "and for what purpose have you come to us, poor elders?"

Zosimas answered:

"Whence I have come there is no need to speak; I have come, father, seeking benefit for my soul, since I have heard much great and praiseworthy about you, which could lead the soul to God."

"Brother," the abbot replied to him, "God alone can heal the infirmities of the soul; may He instruct both you and us in His ways for the benefit of the soul, for a man cannot correct a man unless he constantly examines himself and, with God's help, unceasingly performs ascetic labours. But since the love of Christ has moved you to visit us poor elders, remain with us, if you have come for this purpose. May the Good Shepherd, who gave His soul for our salvation, bestow on all of us the grace of the Holy Spirit."

After such words Zosimas bowed to the abbot, asked for his prayers and blessing, and remained in the monastery. Here he saw elders who shone with good deeds and piety, who with ardent hearts served the Lord with unceasing singing, all-night prayer, and constant labour. Psalms were always on their lips; no idle word was ever heard; they knew nothing of acquiring temporal goods or of worldly cares. They had one constant aim: to mortify their flesh. Their chief and constant food was the word of God, and their bodies they nourished with bread and water, as much as love for God allowed each one. Seeing this, Zosimas was instructed and prepared himself for the labour that lay before him.

Much time passed; the days of the holy Great Lent arrived. The monastery gates were locked and were opened only when someone was sent on monastery business. Desolate was that region; laymen not only did not come, but did not even know of that monastery.

In that monastery there was a custom, for the sake of which God had brought Zosimas there. In the first week of Great Lent, at the Liturgy, all partook of the Most Pure Body and Blood of the Lord and ate a little Lenten food; then everyone gathered in the church, and after diligent, kneeling prayer the elders took leave of one another; and each, with a bow, asked the abbot's blessing for the struggle that lay before them. After this the monastery gates were opened, and singing the psalm, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 26:1),

the monks went out into the desert and crossed the river Jordan. Only one or two elders remained in the monastery, not to guard property—there was nothing there to steal—but so that the church should not be left without services. Each took with him a little food, as much as he could and wished according to his bodily needs: one a little bread, another figs, another dates or wheat soaked in water. Some took nothing with them except the rags on their bodies, and when hunger compelled them they fed on the herbs growing in the desert.

Having crossed the Jordan, everyone dispersed far off in different directions and did not know of one another how each fasted and laboured. If someone saw another coming towards him, he turned away in another direction and continued his life in solitude in constant prayer, partaking at fixed times of very little food. Thus the monks spent the whole of Great Lent and returned to the monastery a week before the Resurrection of Christ, when the Church with the Palms[1] solemnly keeps the feast of Palms. Arriving at the monastery, no one among the brethren asked another how he had spent the time in the desert and what he had been doing, having as witness only his own conscience. Such was the monastic rule of the monastery by the Jordan.

Zosimas, according to the custom of that monastery, also crossed the Jordan, taking with him, because of bodily weakness, a little food and the garment that he wore constantly. Wandering in the desert, he performed his prayerful labour and abstained from food as far as possible. He slept little; wherever night overtook him, there he slept a little, sitting on the ground, and early in the morning he awoke and continued his labour. He increasingly longed to go deeper into the desert and there to find one of the ascetics who could instruct him.

After twenty days of travel he once halted and, turning towards the east, began to sing the sixth hour[2], performing the usual prayers: during his labour he, pausing, sang and prayed at each hour. As he was

1. Vaia: branches of palm (Jn. 12:13; Mk. 11:8). The Sunday of Vaia, otherwise called the Flowering or Flower-bearing Sunday, is Palm Sunday.

2. The Hours: so are called the prayers consisting of three psalms, several verses and prayers, adapted to each quarter of the day and to the particular circumstances of the Savior's sufferings. At the Sixth Hour are commemorated the Savior's procession to crucifixion, the crucifixion itself, and the sufferings on the Cross.

singing thus, he saw on his right side what seemed to be the shadow of a human body. Frightened, and thinking it a demonic delusion, he began to cross himself. When the fear had passed and the prayer was finished, he turned to the south and saw a man, naked, blackened by the sun, with hair as white as wool, reaching only to his neck. Zosimas ran in that direction with great joy: in recent days he had seen not only no man but not even an animal. When this man saw from afar that Zosimas was approaching him, he hastily ran deeper into the desert. But Zosimas, as though forgetting both his old age and the weariness of the road, rushed to overtake the fugitive. The other hastened away, but Zosimas ran faster, and when he had come near enough for them to hear each other, he cried out with tears:

"Why do you, servant of the True God, for whose sake you have settled in the desert, flee from me, a sinful old man? Wait for me, unworthy and weak, for the hope of the reward for your labour! Stop, pray for me, and for the sake of the Lord God, who disdains no one, give me your blessing."

So Zosimas cried out with tears. Meanwhile they reached a hollow, like the bed of a dried-up river. The fugitive rushed to the other side, while Zosimas, weary and having no strength to run further, redoubled his tearful entreaties and stopped. Then the one fleeing from Zosimas at last halted and spoke thus:

"Abba[3] Zosimas! Forgive me, for God's sake, that I cannot present myself before you: I am a woman, as you see, naked, covered by nothing in my nakedness. But if you wish to impart to me, a sinner, your prayer and blessing, then throw me something from your clothing to cover myself, and then I will turn to you for prayer."

Fear and terror seized Zosimas when he heard his own name from the lips of one who had never seen him and had heard nothing of him.

"If she were not a seer," he thought, "she would not have called me by name."

Quickly he fulfilled her desire: he took off his worn, torn garment and, turning away, threw it to her. Taking the garment, she girded her-

3. Abba: father, teacher.

self and covered her nakedness as far as she could. Then she addressed Zosimas with these words:

"Why, Abba Zosimas, did you desire to see me, a sinful woman? Do you wish to hear or learn something from me, and therefore did not shrink from the difficult road?"

But Zosimas threw himself on the ground and asked her for a blessing. She too bowed down to the earth, and so both lay there, each asking the other for a blessing; only one word could be heard: "Bless!" After a long time she said to the elder:

"Abba Zosimas! You must bless and offer prayer, for you are invested with the rank of priest and for many years have stood before the sanctuary, performing the Divine Mysteries."

These words struck the elder with even greater fear. Shedding tears, and with difficulty drawing breath from trembling, he said to her:

"O spiritual mother! You have drawn near to God by mortifying the infirmities of the flesh. God's gift shines in you more than in others: you have never seen me, yet you call me by name and know my priestly rank. Therefore, rather, bless me for God's sake and impart to me your holy prayer."

Moved by the elder's insistence, she blessed him with these words:

"Blessed is God, who desireth the salvation of human souls!"

Zosimas answered "Amen," and both rose from the ground. Then she asked the elder:

"Man of God! Why did you desire to visit me, naked and adorned with no virtues? But the grace of the Holy Spirit has led you, so that, when needed, you might tell me also about earthly life. Tell me then, Father, how Christians now live, and the emperor and the holy churches?"

"By your holy prayers," answered Zosimas, "God has granted the Church lasting peace.[4] But bow to the entreaties of an unworthy old man and pray to the Lord for the whole world and for me, a sinner, that my wandering in the desert may not pass fruitlessly."

4. This was at the beginning of the sixth century, when the persecutions had already ceased and the heresies had subsided, and the Christian Church enjoyed peace and tranquility.

"Rather it is for you, Abba Zosimas," she said, "as one who holds the sacred rank, to pray for me and for all; for to this you are destined. But out of the duty of obedience I will fulfil your wish."

With these words she turned toward the east; raising her eyes upward and lifting her hands, she began to pray, but so quietly that Zosimas neither heard nor understood the words of the prayer. In trembling he stood in silence, his head bowed.

"I call God to witness," he related, "that after a while I raised my eyes and saw her lifted a cubit above the ground;[5] thus she stood in the air and prayed." Seeing this, Zosimas trembled with fear, fell weeping to the ground, and could only say:

"Lord, have mercy!"

But then he was troubled by the thought whether this was a spirit, or an apparition, as it were praying to God. But the saint, raising the elder from the ground, said:

"Why, Zosimas, does the thought of an apparition trouble you? Why do you think that I am a spirit performing prayer? I beseech you, blessed Father, be assured that I am a sinful woman, cleansed only by holy baptism; no, I am not a spirit but earth, dust and ashes; I am flesh, not presuming to be a spirit."

With these words she signed her brow, eyes, lips and breast with the sign of the Cross, and continued:

"May God deliver us from the evil one and from his snares, for great is his warfare against us."[6]

Hearing such words, the elder fell at her feet and cried out with tears:

"By the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the true God born of the Virgin, for whose sake you, naked, have so mortified your flesh, I adjure you: do not hide from me, but tell me all about your life, and I shall glorify the greatness of God. For God's sake, tell it not for boasting, but to give instruction to me, a sinner and unworthy. I believe in my God, for whom you live, that I set out into this desert precisely so that God

5. *Lokot'* or *lakot'*: a measure of length from the elbow to the end of the middle finger, equal to 10½ vershoks.
6. Strife: attack, plotting.

might glorify your deeds: we are not able to resist the ways of God. If it had not pleased God that you and your ascetic labours should become known, He would not have revealed you to me, nor would He have strengthened me for so distant a journey through the desert."

Zosimas urged her long with other words as well, and she, raising him up, said:

"Forgive me, holy Father. I am ashamed to recount my shameful life. But you have seen my naked body, so I shall also lay bare my soul, and you will learn how much shame and disgrace there is in it. I shall open myself to you, not boasting, as you have said: what should I boast of, I, a chosen vessel of the devil! But if I begin the account of my life, you will flee from me as from a serpent; your hearing will not endure the tale of my debauchery. Nevertheless I shall tell it, concealing nothing. Only I beg you, when you have learned my life, do not forget to pray for me, that I may obtain some mercy on the Day of Judgement."

The elder, with uncontrollable tears, asked her to recount her life, and she began to tell about herself thus:

"I, holy Father, was born in Egypt, but at the age of twelve, while my parents were still alive, I rejected their love and set out for Alexandria.[7] How I lost my maidenly purity and came to give myself up without restraint, insatiably, to fornication, I cannot even think of without shame, much less recount at length; I shall only say briefly, so that thou mayest know of my unbridled lust. For seventeen years, and even more, I committed fornication with all, not for a gift or payment, since I wished to take nothing from anyone, but I reasoned that men would come to me and satisfy my lust more readily for nothing. Do not think that I was rich and therefore did not take; no, I lived in poverty, often hungry, spinning tow, but I was always possessed by the desire to sink ever deeper into the mire of fornication: I saw my life in constant dishonour. Once, during the harvest, I saw many men, both

7. Alexandria: a famous city founded by Alexander the Great on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, at the mouth of the river Nile. After Rome, Alexandria was the first city in the world and served as a center of commerce, industry, and especially of pagan learning, while in the first centuries of Christianity it was a nursery of Christian enlightenment. At present Alexandria belongs among the most fortified seaport cities and the most important trading points on the Mediterranean.

Egyptians and Libyans,[8] going toward the sea. I asked a passerby where these people were hurrying. He answered that they were going to Jerusalem for the feast of the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross, which was soon to take place. To my question whether they would take me with them too, he said that if I had money and food, no one would hinder me. I said to him: 'No, brother, I have neither money nor food, but nevertheless I shall go and sit with them in one ship, and they will feed me: I shall give them my body for payment.' I wished to go so that, forgive me, my father, there would be many men around me ready for lust. I told thee, Father Zosimas, not to force me to recount my shame. God is my witness, I fear that by my words I defile the very air."

Watering the earth with his tears, Zosimas cried out:

"Speak, my mother, speak! Continue thy instructive tale!"

"The young man I met," she continued, "having heard my shameless speech, laughed and walked away. And I, throwing down the spindle whorl I happened to have, hastened to the sea. Looking over the travellers, I noticed among them some ten men or more standing on the shore; they were young and seemed to answer to my desire. Others had already gone aboard the ship.

Shamelessly, as was my habit, I ran up to those standing there and said: 'Take me with you too; I shall give you pleasure.' They laughed at these and similar words, and seeing my impudence, they took me with them on the ship, and we set sail. How shall I tell thee, man of God, what happened next? What tongue, what ear could bear the account of the shameful deeds I committed on the ship during the voyage: I drew them into sin even against their will, and there was no shameful act I did not teach them. Believe me, Father, I shudder that the sea could bear such debauchery, that the earth did not open and swallow me alive into hell after I had seduced so many people! But I think that God awaited my repentance, not desiring the death of a sinner, but patiently waiting for his conversion."

With such feelings I arrived in Jerusalem, and all the days until the feast I continued as before, and even worse. Not only was I not satisfied

with the youths who had been with me on the ship, but I also gathered the local inhabitants and strangers for fornication. At last the feast of the Exaltation of the Precious Cross came, and I went, as before, to seduce young men. Seeing that early in the morning everyone was going one after another to the church, I too went, entered the vestibule with all the others, and when the hour of the holy Exaltation of the Precious Cross of the Lord arrived, I tried to press with the people into the church. However hard I struggled to push through, the people kept me back. At last, with great difficulty, I approached the doors of the church, I, the wretched one. But everyone entered the church without hindrance, while some divine power did not allow me to enter. I tried again to go in, and again I was pushed back, and remained alone in the vestibule. Thinking that this came from my womanly weakness, I mingled into a new crowd, but my effort proved vain; my sinful foot was already touching the threshold, the church admitted everyone without hindrance, but it did not admit me alone, the wretched one; as though a numerous armed guard had been posted for the purpose, an unseen force held me back, and so once more I found myself in the vestibule. Three or four times in this way I strained my strength, but without success. Exhausted, I could no longer force my way into the crowd of those entering, and my whole body ached from the crush and pressure. In despair I drew back in shame and stood in a corner of the vestibule. Coming to myself, I thought what guilt prevented me from seeing the Life-giving Tree of the Cross of the Lord. The light of saving reason, the truth of God, illuminating the eyes of the soul, touched my heart and showed that the abomination of my deeds forbade me to enter the church. Then I began to weep bitterly, to beat my breast with sobs and to sigh from the depths of my heart.

Thus I wept, standing in the vestibule. Lifting my eyes, I saw on the wall an icon of the Most Holy Theotokos, and, turning to it my bodily and spiritual eyes, I cried out:

"O Lady, Virgin who bore God in the flesh! I know, I deeply know, that there is no honor or praise to Thee when I, impure and foul, look

8. Libyans: inhabitants of Libya, a province in North Africa.

upon Thy face, the Ever-Virgin, pure in body and soul. It would be just if Thy virginal purity should loathe and hate me, the harlot. But I have heard that the God born of Thee became incarnate in order to call sinners to repentance. Come, then, to me, forsaken by all, to help! Command that the entrance to the church not be forbidden to me, grant me to behold the Precious Tree on which He who was born of Thee in the flesh was crucified, He who shed His holy blood for the deliverance of sinners and for mine. Command, O Lady, that for me also, unworthy as I am, the doors of the church may be opened for the veneration of the Divine Cross! Be my faithful surety before Thy Son, that I shall no longer defile my body with the impurity of fornication, but, having looked upon the Tree of the Cross, I shall renounce the world and its allurements and go wherever Thou shalt lead me, Thou surety of my salvation."

Thus I spoke. Encouraged by faith and persuaded of the mercy of the Theotokos, I moved, as if at someone's prompting, from the place where I was praying, and mingled with the crowd entering the church. Now no one pushed me away or hindered me from reaching the doors of the church. Fear and terror seized me, and I trembled all over. Reaching the doors, which before had been closed to me, I entered the holy church without difficulty and was granted to see the Life-giving Tree, I came to know the mysteries of God, and understood that God does not reject the penitent. Falling to the ground, I bowed to the Precious Cross and kissed it with trembling. Then I went out of the church to the icon of my surety, the Theotokos, and, kneeling before her holy icon, I prayed thus:

"O Most Blessed Virgin, Lady Theotokos, not disdaining my prayer, Thou hast shown in me Thy great love for mankind. I have seen the glory of the Lord, I, a harlot, unworthy to behold it! Glory to God, who for Thy sake receives the repentance of sinners! This is all that I, a sinner, can think and say in words. Now, Lady, it is time to fulfill what I promised when I called upon Thee as my surety: guide me as Thy will is, and teach me how to complete my salvation on the path of repentance."

After these words I heard, as if from afar, a voice:

"If thou crossest over the Jordan, thou wilt find for thyself perfect rest."

Hearing these words with faith that they were addressed to me, I cried out with tears, gazing at the icon[9] of the Theotokos:

"Lady, Lady Theotokos, do not forsake me!"

With these words I left the vestibule of the church and walked quickly ahead. On the road someone gave me three coins, saying:

"Take this, mother."

I accepted the coins, bought three loaves of bread, and asked the seller the way to the Jordan. Learning which gate led in that direction, I walked quickly on, shedding tears. Thus I spent the whole day on the road, asking directions of those I met, and by the third hour of that day, when I was granted to see the holy Cross of Christ, now at sunset, I reached the church of St. John the Baptist by the river Jordan. Having prayed in the church, I went down to the Jordan and washed my hands and face with the water of that holy river. Returning to the church, I partook of the Most Pure and Life-giving Mysteries of Christ. Then I ate half of one loaf, drank water from the Jordan, and fell asleep on the ground. Early in the morning, finding a small boat, I crossed to the other bank, and again turned to my guide, the Theotokos, with prayer that she might instruct me as it pleased her. Thus I withdrew into the desert, where I have wandered until this day, waiting for the salvation which God will grant me from my spiritual and bodily sufferings."

Zosimas asked:

"How many years, lady, have passed since thou settled in this desert?"

"I think," she answered, "forty-seven years have passed since I left the holy city."

"And what," asked Zosimas, "do you find for food?"

"After crossing the Jordan," said the saint, "I had two and a half loaves; they gradually dried out, as if turned to stone, and I ate them little by little for several years."

9. This icon, according to the Russian chronicles, was afterwards transferred to the church of St. Sophia in Constantinople.

"How could you live safely for so long, and no temptation disturb you?"

"I am afraid to answer your question, Father Zosimas: when I recall the troubles I endured from the thoughts that tormented me, I fear that they will take possession of me again."

"Nothing, lady," said Zosimas, "do not leave out anything in your account; I asked precisely so as to know all the details of your life."

Then she said:

"Believe me, Father Zosimas, that I have lived seventeen years in this desert, struggling with my mad passions as with savage beasts. When I took up food, I dreamed of meat and wine, such as I ate in Egypt; I longed to drink the wine I loved. While in the world I drank much wine, and here I had not even water; I languished from thirst and suffered terribly. Sometimes there arose in me a very disturbing desire to sing the wanton songs to which I had been accustomed. Then I shed tears, beat my breast, and remembered the vows I had made when I withdrew into the desert. Then I stood mentally before the icon of my surety, the Most Pure Theotokos, and with weeping implored her to drive away the thoughts that disturbed my soul. For a long time I wept thus, striking my breast hard, and at last, as if a light spread around me, I was calmed from my agitations. How can I confess to you, Father, the carnal desires that possessed me? Forgive me, Father. The fire of passion kindled in me and scorched me, urging me to lust. When such temptation came upon me, I would throw myself on the ground and bathe in tears, imagining that my surety herself stood before me, condemning my transgression and threatening heavy torments for it. Prostrate on the ground, I did not rise day and night until that light shone upon me and drove away the thoughts that troubled me. Then I raised my eyes to my surety, earnestly asking help in my sufferings in the desert, and indeed she gave me help and guidance in repentance. So I spent seventeen years in constant torment. And afterwards, even until now, the Theotokos is in all things my helper and guide."

Then Zosimas asked:

"Did you have need of food and clothing?"

The saint answered:

"When the loaves were finished, after seventeen years I fed on plants; the clothing I had when I crossed the Jordan wore out from age, and I suffered much, growing faint in the summer heat, shivering in the winter cold, so that many times I fell to the ground as one lifeless and lay there a long time, enduring many bodily and spiritual afflictions. But from that time until today, the power of God has in everything transformed my sinful soul and my humble body, and I only recall my former privations, finding for myself inexhaustible food in hope of salvation: I am nourished and clothed by the all-powerful word of God, for those who have no shelter have clothed themselves in stones, since they have stripped off the garment of sin (cf. Slav. Job 24:8; Heb. 11:38)."

Hearing that the saint recalled words of Holy Scripture from Moses, the prophets, and the Psalter, Zosimas asked whether she had studied the psalms and other books.

"Do not think," she answered with a smile, "that since my crossing of the Jordan I have seen any man except you: I have not seen even a single beast or animal. And I never learned from books, never heard reading or singing from anyone's lips, but the word of God everywhere and always enlightens the mind and reaches even me, unknown to the world. But I entreat you by the Incarnation of the Word of God: pray for me, the harlot."

So she said. The elder threw himself at her feet with tears and cried out:

“Blessed be God, who doeth great and fearful, wondrous and glorious works, whose number is beyond reckoning! Blessed be God, who hath shown me how He rewardeth those who fear Him! Truly, Thou, O Lord, forsakest not those who seek Thee!”

The Saint would not suffer the elder to bow down to her, and said:

“I adjure thee, holy father, by Jesus Christ, God our Savior, tell no one what thou hast heard from me until God taketh me from the earth. Now go in peace; in a year thou shalt see me again, if the grace of God preserve us. But do this for God's sake, which I shall ask of thee: in the coming year, during the fast, do not cross the Jordan, as ye are wont to do in the monastery.”

Zosimas marveled at her speaking of the monastic rule as well, and could say nothing but:

"Glory to God, who rewardeth those who love Him!"

“So thou, holy father,” she continued, “remain in the monastery, as I tell thee, for it will be impossible for thee to leave, even if thou wouldest. On the holy and Great Thursday, the day of Christ's Mystical Supper, take the life-giving Body and Blood in a holy vessel fitting for this purpose, bring it to the secular settlement on the other side of the Jordan, and wait for me, that I may partake of the Life-giving Gifts. For since I communed before crossing the Jordan in the church of John the Forerunner, until this day I have not tasted the holy Gifts. Now I long for this with all my heart, and do not refuse my entreaty, but without fail bring me the Life-giving and Divine Mysteries at the hour when the Lord made His disciples partakers of His Divine Supper. Say to John, abbot of the monastery where thou dwellest: watch over thyself and thy brethren, for in many things ye must amend yourselves. But say this not now, but when God shall instruct thee.”

After these words she again asked the elder to pray for her, and withdrew into the depths of the desert. Zosimas, bowing to the earth and kissing, to the glory of God, the place where her feet had stood, went back, praising and blessing Christ our God.

Having crossed the desert, he reached the monastery on the day when the brethren who lived there were accustomed to return. Of what he had seen he kept silent, not daring to tell it, but in his soul he prayed God to grant him another chance to see the beloved face of the ascetic. With sorrow he thought how long the year stretched, and wished that this time might pass like a single day.

When the first week of the Great Lent came, all the brethren, according to custom and the monastic rule, after prayer, went out into the desert with singing. Only Zosimas, suffering from a grievous infirmity, was compelled to remain in the monastery. Then he recalled the holy woman's words: "It will be impossible for thee to leave, even if thou wouldest!" Soon recovering from his illness, Zosimas remained in the monastery. When the brethren returned and the day of the Mystical Supper drew near, the elder did all that had been enjoined upon him: he

placed in a small vessel the Most Pure Body and Blood of Christ our God; then, taking in a basket some dried figs and dates and a little wheat soaked in water, late in the evening he went out of the monastery and sat down on the bank of the Jordan, awaiting the coming of the Venerable Mother. The Saint did not come for a long time, but Zosimas, without closing his eyes, kept gazing unceasingly toward the desert, hoping to see what he so greatly desired. "Perhaps," thought the elder, "I am unworthy that she should come to me, or she has already come earlier and, not finding me, returned." At such thoughts he wept, sighed, and, raising his eyes to heaven, began to pray: "Do not deprive me, O Master, of again beholding that face which Thou didst vouchsafe me to see! Do not let me depart here unappeased, under the burden of sins that condemn me!"

Then another thought came to him: "Even if she comes to the Jordan, and there is no boat, how will she cross and come to me, unworthy as I am? Woe is me, sinner, woe! Who has deprived me of the happiness of seeing her?"

Thus thought the elder, and the Venerable Mother had already come to the river. Seeing her, Zosimas rose with joy and gave thanks to God. He was still tormented by the thought that she could not cross the Jordan, when he saw that the Saint, illumined by the brightness of the moon, made the sign of the Cross over the river, descended from the bank onto the water, and walked toward him upon the water as upon firm ground. Seeing this, the astonished Zosimas wished to bow down to her, but the Saint, still walking on the water, forbade it and cried out: "What art thou doing? Thou art a priest and bearest the Divine Mysteries!"

The elder obeyed her words, and the Saint, coming up onto the bank, asked his blessing. Overcome with awe at the wondrous vision, he cried out: "Truly God fulfills His promise to make like unto Himself those who are saved according to their strength! Glory to Thee, Christ our God, who hast shown me through Thy servant how far I still am from perfection!"

Then the Saint asked him to read the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. At the end of the prayer, she communed of the Most Pure and Life-giv-

ing Mysteries of Christ, and, according to monastic custom, kissed the elder, after which she sighed and cried out with tears:

"Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart, O Master, according to Thy word, in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation" (Lk. 2:29–30).

Then, turning to Zosimas, the Saint said:

"I beg thee, father, do not refuse to fulfill one more desire of mine: now go to thy monastery, and next year come to the same stream where thou didst formerly converse with me; come for God's sake, and thou shalt see me again: so God wills."

"If it were possible," the holy elder answered her, "I would wish always to follow thee and to see thy shining face. But I beg thee, fulfill my desire, the elder's: taste a little of the food I have brought."

Here he showed what he had brought in the basket. The Saint touched the wheat with the tips of her fingers, took three grains, and, bringing them to her lips, said:

"This is enough: the grace of spiritual food, which keeps the soul undefiled, will satisfy me. Again I beg thee, holy father, pray to the Lord for me, remembering my wretchedness."

The elder bowed to the earth and asked her prayers for the Church, for the tsars, and for himself. After this tearful request he took leave of her with sobs, not daring to detain her further. Even had he wished, he had no power to stop her. The Saint again made the sign of the Cross over the Jordan and, as before, crossed the river as if on dry land. The elder returned to the monastery, stirred by both joy and fear; he reproached himself for not having learned the name of the Venerable Mother, but hoped to learn it in the coming year.

Another year passed. Zosimas again went into the desert, fulfilling the monastic custom, and made his way to the place where he had had the wondrous vision. He passed through the whole desert, recognized the sought-for place by certain signs, and began to look intently about him, like an experienced hunter seeking rich prey. Yet he saw no one approaching him. Weeping, he raised his eyes to heaven and began to pray: "Lord, show me Thy treasure, which no one can take, which Thou hast hidden in the desert; show me the holy righteous woman,

this Angel in the flesh, with whom the whole world is not worthy to be compared!"

Uttering such a prayer, the elder reached the place where the stream flowed, and, standing on the bank, saw to the east the Venerable Mother lying dead; her hands were folded, as is fitting for those lying in a grave, and her face was turned to the east. Quickly he drew near to her and, falling at her feet, reverently kissed them and bathed them with his tears. For a long time he wept; then, having read the psalms and prayers appointed for burial, he began to consider whether he could bury the body of the Venerable Mother, and whether this would be pleasing to her. Then he saw at the blessed woman's head an inscription traced on the earth: "Bury, Abba Zosimas, on this spot the body of the humble Mary; give dust to dust. Pray to God for me, who died in the month which the Egyptians call Pharmouthi and the Romans April, on the first day, on the night of the saving Passion of Christ, after communing of the Divine Mysteries.[10]"

Having read the inscription, the elder first wondered who could have written it: the Saint, as she herself said, did not know how to write. But he was very glad to learn the name of the Venerable Mother. Moreover, he learned that the Saint, having communed on the bank of the Jordan, had within a single hour reached the place of her death, to which he had come after twenty days of difficult travel, and had immediately given up her soul to God.

"Now," thought Zosimas, "I must fulfill the Saint's command, but how shall I, wretched man, dig a grave without any tool in my hands?"

Then he saw near him a branch of a tree cast aside in the desert, took it, and began to dig. However, the dry earth did not yield to the elder's efforts; he was drenched in sweat but could accomplish nothing. He sighed bitterly from the depths of his soul. Suddenly, raising his eyes, he saw a huge lion standing by the body of the Venerable Mother and licking her feet. The elder was terrified at the sight of the beast, the more so since he recalled the Saint's words that she had never seen wild animals. He signed himself with the Cross, trusting that the power

10. The Venerable Mary reposed in the year 522.

of the departed Saint would protect him. The lion began gently to approach the elder, looking at him kindly, as if with love. Then Zosimas said to the beast: "The great ascetic commanded me to bury her body, but I am old and cannot dig a grave; I have no tool for digging, and the monastery is far away; I cannot quickly bring one from there. Dig, then, with thy claws a grave, and I will bury the body of the Venerable Mother."

The lion seemed to understand these words, and with his forepaws he dug a pit sufficient for a burial. The elder again moistened the saint's feet with his tears, asking her prayers for the whole world, and covered her body with earth. The saint was almost naked: the old, torn garment which Zosimas had thrown to her at their first meeting barely covered her body. Then the two departed: the lion, meek as a lamb, into the depths of the desert, and Zosimas to his monastery, blessing and glorifying Christ our God.

On coming to the monastery, he told all the monks, concealing nothing of what he had seen and heard, about the Venerable Mary. All marveled at the greatness of God, and resolved to honor the memory of the Venerable with fear, faith and love, and to celebrate the day of her repose.

The hegumen John, as the Venerable Mary had herself related to Abba Zosimas, found certain irregularities in the monastery and corrected them with God's help. And St. Zosimas, after a long life of nearly a hundred years, ended his earthly existence and passed to life eternal, to God[11]. The monks of that monastery passed on his account of the Venerable Mary to one another orally, for the instruction of all, but they did not set down the saint's exploits in writing.

"And I," adds St. Sophronius, "having heard the account, wrote it down. I do not know whether someone else, better informed, has perhaps already written the life of the Venerable, but I too have recorded everything, as far as I was able, setting forth one truth. May God, who works wondrous miracles and bountifully rewards those who turn to Him in faith, reward those who seek instruction from this narrative,

11. The Venerable Zosimas reposed in the first half of the sixth century. His memory is celebrated on April 4.

those who listen to it, those who read it, and those who have taken pains to write it down, and may He grant them the lot of the blessed Mary together with all who have ever pleased God by their pious thoughts and labors."

Let us also give glory to God, the eternal King, and may He grant us His mercy on the Day of Judgment for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord, to whom belong all glory, honor, dominion and worship, with the Father and the Most Holy and Life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen[12].

Troparion, Tone 8:

In thee, O Mother, was the image of God truly preserved: for taking up the cross, thou didst follow Christ, and by thy deeds didst teach us to despise the flesh, which passeth away, and to care rather for the soul, which is immortal. Wherefore, O Venerable Mary, thy spirit rejoiceth with the Angels.

Kontakion, Tone 4:

Having escaped the gloom of sin, and having illumined thy heart with the light of repentance, O glorious one, thou didst come to Christ, bringing to Him His All-immaculate and holy Mother, a merciful Intercessor. Thus thou didst obtain the forgiveness of transgressions, and thou rejoicest with the Angels for ever.

* * *

Memory of our Venerable Father Euthymius of Suzdal

Память преподобного отца нашего Евфимия Суздальского

The Venerable Euthymius was born of pious parents. His place of birth and upbringing was Nizhny Novgorod. When he came of age, his parents gave him over to be taught the Divine Scriptures, and the blessed youth studied them with great diligence together with

12. The Holy Orthodox Church has appointed that the Life of the Venerable Mary of Egypt be commemorated during the Great Lent. On Thursday of the fifth week of the Great Lent, at Matins, the whole penitential Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete is read, and 18 troparia of this canon are addressed to the Venerable Mary (the "Standing of Mary").

his companions, while wholly avoiding childish games. Inclined to silence and obedient in all things to his parents, he often visited the churches of God, where he loved to stand, withdrawn into a dark corner, so that no one could distract him with conversation about the perishable things of this world, and so that he could listen with full attention to the singing and reading in the church. Once he came into the holy church and heard in the Gospel the words: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me," and the rest (Lk. 9 ff.). Hearing these words, the blessed Euthymius resolved to renounce the goods of this world, and went to the Pechersk Monastery of the Ascension of the Lord[13], near Nizhny Novgorod, where he received the monastic tonsure from the abbot of that monastery, named Dionysius. Having entered the monastery, Euthymius began to devote himself to great ascetic labors. With the Psalms of David being constantly sung, he usually spent the day in toil, diligently performing the various monastery works, and at night he withdrew into a cave and there offered to God all-night prayers with tears. The blessed monk accomplished these exploits in obedience in all things to his mentor, the Venerable Dionysius. In his later life he attained such a degree of asceticism that he would sometimes spend the whole night without sleep in prayer, and subjected himself to such exertion often. At the same time he was so temperate in food that he consumed only as much as was needful to avoid fainting from hunger, and drank nothing but water, and that only when he felt strong thirst. After this his mentor assigned him the obedience of serving at the bakehouse. Here he increased his exploits still further, for he constantly carried water and chopped wood. Soon he was ordered to serve in the bakehouse itself. Working there, the Venerable always brought to memory the eternal torments of the unquenchable fire and the gnawing worm. Often, looking at the fire, he would say to himself: "Endure, Euthymius, so that through this fire thou mayest escape the eternal fire."

13. The Pechersk Monastery of the Ascension was founded in the vicinity of Nizhny Novgorod about 1330 by a friend of St. Sergius of Radonezh, St. Dionysius, who dug for himself a cave five versts from the city on the bank of the river Volga and labored in it; afterwards he was archimandrite of his monastery and subsequently Archbishop of Suzdal. He reposed in the rank of Metropolitan of Kiev in 1384. His memory is June 26.

Seeing such exploits and patience in the Venerable Euthymius, everyone regarded him not as a man, but as an Angel of God living among them.

At that time the principality of Suzdal and Nizhny Novgorod was ruled by the Grand Prince Boris Konstantinovich[14]. He asked the abbot of the Pechersk monastery, the Venerable Dionysius, to send the blessed Euthymius to him at Suzdal as the builder of a monastery which he had resolved to establish. The blessed Dionysius gladly promised the Grand Prince to fulfill his request, and after a short time the Venerable Euthymius, having received a parting prayer and blessing from his mentor, set out on his way. When he came to the town of Gorokhovets, near it, at a distance of about eight versts, he built a church in the name of St. Basil, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, and established beside it a cenobitic hermitage[15]; then he went to Suzdal to the Grand Prince Boris Konstantinovich. The prince rejoiced greatly at the arrival of the Venerable, and after spending some time in conversation with him, went with him to the Bishop of Suzdal, John. On arriving at the bishop's, the Grand Prince disclosed to him his intention, related in order the life of the blessed Dionysius, how the Lord had granted him the gift of prophecy and how he had blessed him to establish the monastery, and also told of the Venerable Euthymius. After this the prince asked the bishop to go with him to seek out a place for establishing the monastery, and the bishop set out with the Grand Prince, and the Venerable Euthymius went with them too. Soon they found a place near the town, on a hill by a river called the Kamennitsa, on whose bank the town of Suzdal was also situated, and this place pleased them. Then they offered a prayer, giving thanks to God.

After this a great crowd of people gathered at that place: the rulers of all the princely domains, boyars, princes and courtiers of his house-

14. It is not known why Boris Konstantinovich is here called Grand Prince. The Suzdal princes did, it is true, lay claim to the grand-princely throne after the death of Simeon the Proud in 1353, but they met with failure in this, and only after the repose of John II the Meek, in 1359, did the Suzdal prince Demetrius Konstantinovich receive the grand principality. However, the latter was Grand Prince for only a few years. In 1363 he was compelled to yield the grand-princely throne to the son of John the Meek, Demetrius Ivanovich Donskoi.

15. This hermitage was always attached to the Spaso-Euthymius Monastery.

hold, the clergy, the monastic brethren, and men and women of various ages. In the presence of this multitude, Bishop John blessed and consecrated the place for the monastery, and after a special prayer raised the cross on the spot where the Holy Table of the first church was to stand. Then the prince ordered stones and everything necessary for building the church to be prepared. And when the prince's command had been fulfilled, he himself first, taking a spade, began with his own hands to dig a trench, and the rulers of the land and the boyars followed his example.

After this a service was held for the foundation of the church, and the church was laid in honor of the Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ; then they began to raise the walls of the building. The Venerable Euthymius, having asked the bishop's blessing, took an axe and with his own hands hewed three stones at the north door of the sanctuary, near the holy table of oblation, and made for himself a tomb, where his honorable body was afterwards laid.

The church was completed in construction in 1352[16] and was consecrated the same year. Bishop John raised the blessed Euthymius to the rank of archimandrite and entrusted to his leadership the Christian flock, the rational sheep of Christ; and the prince gave him a large quantity of gold and silver for the establishment of the monastery. From this time the Venerable Euthymius began to devote himself to great exploits with tears of contrition. By day he labored diligently in building the monastery, and by night he offered to God unceasing and fervent prayers; and thus he established the monastery and in it cells for the future brethren. Besides the church already there, he built another church in the name of the Venerable Father John Climacus, and added to it a stone refectory, where the monks could gather for prayer and for taking food on winter days. When about 300 brethren had gathered to the Venerable at the monastery and could not all fit into the refectory, he ordered a new church to be built in the name of St. Nicholas, Wonderworker of Myra, called the hospital church, and beside it a

16. This year is also considered the year of the founding of the monastery, which afterwards received the name Spaso-Euthymius Monastery. It is notable because among the monasteries of Suzdal it was the first in which the common life (cenobitic life) was introduced.

large wooden refectory, so that those of the brethren who could not fit with the others into the stone refectory might gather there. After this, other buildings necessary for the monastery were erected as need required.

Thus, by the labors and prayers of Venerable Euthymius, with the cooperation of the grace of God, his monastery was established, fully meeting all the needs of the monastic life. And he began to lead the flock entrusted to him firmly and in a God-pleasing manner. He established the rule that all the monks should abide in obedience without murmuring, in sincere love toward one another, in chastity and non-possessiveness; that none of them should have anything of his own, but that everything should be held in common; and if he learned that any of the brethren possessed property, he imposed a penance upon him. He did not permit the brethren to converse with one another in the church, and he always required them to keep silence during meals. After the meal he commanded everyone to go to their cells in silence, without entering into any conversation with one another, and he did not permit visiting the cells of others except in some case of extreme need. Moreover, he decreed as a general rule that none of the monks should in any way have his own opinions, but that each should be ready to perform any obedience. And the brethren, for their part, obeyed him in everything as an Angel of God.

For spiritual conversations, Venerable Euthymius made journeys to Venerable Sergius, the Wonderworker of Radonezh, in his monastery, since they were contemporaries.[17] After such conversations they gave each other their blessing with love, and then Venerable Euthymius returned again to his monastery.

In such labors the blessed Euthymius lived out his whole life. He never departed from his prayer rule, and, joining fasting with almsgiving, receiving wayfarers and giving food to those who had none, he added new labors to his former ones. He was a garment to the naked and a consolation to the sorrowing, for he helped all the poor, delivered from misfortunes those who had fallen into calamity, healed the sick by

17. In the church hymns, Venerable Euthymius is called "fellow-ascetic and companion" of Venerable Sergius (Menaion for April, 1625).

prayer, paid the debts of debtors, himself forgiving all their debts, and with a single word delivered from the violence of unrighteous judges those who had been overtaken by misfortunes. He loved poverty in clothing so much that he seemed as if he possessed nothing. He always wore only one garment, sewn of coarse sheepskins, and in winter he suffered from the cold, while in summer, because of the weight of his garment, he was tormented by the heat.

Thus, by all sorrowful and narrow paths, Venerable Euthymius completed his course of life, and he began to feel bodily infirmities only when he had reached deep old age. Sensing the approach of his end, he summoned all the monks of the monastery to himself. When they saw that their hegumen was very weak and that the time of his departure to the Lord was near, they all began to grieve at the parting from him and said:

"Father! You are leaving us orphans, and when you are no longer with us, our monastery will be empty."

But the Venerable, comforting them, answered them thus:

"Do not grieve at my parting from you, and know that if I obtain boldness of prayer before God and my work is pleasing to Him, then our monastery will not only not be empty, but after my death the number of monks in it will increase still more, if you too have love for one another."

The Venerable spoke also many other things to comfort the brethren. After this, when the time of his departure to the Lord had already begun to draw near, all the monks, coming to him, kissed him with tears and asked from him his last blessing. And, as a father who loves his children, the Venerable gave his blessing to all, forgave all, and himself asked forgiveness from all. When at last the hour came for the separation of his soul from his body, he partook of the Holy Mysteries, and on the first day of the month of April he gave up his holy soul into the hands of the Lord, after 52 years of governing the monastery.[18] His holy body the monks buried in the aforementioned tomb, which the Venerable had made with his own hands at the beginning of

18. Venerable Euthymius reposed on April 1, 1405, at about 90 years of age.

the construction of the first monastery church. The blessed Euthymius performs many miracles even to this day and grants healings to those who come with faith to his honorable tomb.[19]

Troparion, Tone 3:

As a radiant star, thou didst come from the east to the west, leaving thy fatherland, Nizhny Novgorod, and having come to the God-saved city of Suzdal, thou didst establish a monastery there and gather a multitude of monks; and having received from God the gift of miracles, O Father Euthymius, thou wast a companion and fellow-ascetic of Venerable Sergius for Christ. Entreat Christ our God with him for the health and salvation of our Right-believing Emperor Nicholas Alexandrovich, and for our souls great mercy.

Kontakion, Tone 2:

Passing through the multitude of tempests unwetted, thou didst drown the bodiless enemies in the streams of thy tears, O God-wise Euthymius, Venerable one; and therefore thou didst receive the gift of miracles. Pray unceasingly for us all.

* * *

19. A century after the repose of the Venerable, in 1507, on June 7, while digging a trench for the construction of a new church in place of the Church of the Transfiguration, which had burned in 1491, his relics were uncovered and were found incorrupt: "the face was bright, and the vestments were as if put on yesterday."

ALSO COMMEMORATED THIS DAY

On the same day is the memory of our Venerable Father Macarius the Confessor, who suffered imprisonment and torments for the veneration of holy icons, and who reposed in Aphusia near Constantinople, about 830.

On the same day is the memory of the holy martyrs Gerontius and Basilides, who died by the sword, and the memory of the Righteous Ahaz.

On the same day is commemorated the slaying of the holy Martyr Abraham of Bulgaria, in the year 1299.



THE SECOND DAY OF APRIL

April 2

2 апреля

New Calendar April 2 · Old Calendar April 15 (civil dates)

Passion of the Holy Martyrs Amphian and Edesius

Страдание святых мучеников Амфиана и Едесия

The holy martyrs Amphian and Edesius were brothers according to the flesh, and came of a Greek pagan family. Their homeland was the city of Patara in Lycia[1]. From there their parents sent them to the city of Berytus[2] to study the pagan sciences. Here Amphian and Edesius passed the days of their youth in chastity, astonishing all their peers by their virtuous life. Being alien to every frivolous deed, the holy Amphian and Edesius possessed, according to Scripture, gray hair—wisdom—and the age of old age—an unblemished life (see Wis. 4:9); and for this they were rewarded with the grace of God, for the light of understanding of the truth shone in their hearts: having recognized the vanity of idolatry, they desired to know as perfectly as possible the path of Christian piety, so as to be servants of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When Amphian and Edesius returned from Berytus to their native city, they found their father raised to the rank of city magistrate and still living a godless pagan life together with all their relatives. Not wishing to live among the impious and sinners, the holy Amphian and Edesius secretly left their parents' house and, guided by the Spirit of God, came to the Palestinian city of Caesarea[3]. Here they met a pious Christian presbyter named Pamphilus, who later received the crown of martyrdom for Christ. Having been taught the mysteries of the Christi-

1. Lycia – a region of Asia Minor.
2. Berytus – a Phoenician city which in antiquity was renowned as a center of learning and education. Today Berytus, under the name Beirut, forms the chief city of the Asiatic Turkish vilayet of Syria, being an important commercial center.

an faith by this holy presbyter, the holy Amphian and Edesius were enlightened by the same presbyter with holy baptism. After this the saints remained constantly together with the blessed Pamphilus, glorifying and praising God and occupying themselves with the study of the sacred books and the law of the Lord.

At this time the emperor was Maximian[4], who had received the government of the eastern half of the Roman Empire from his uncle Maximian Galerius[5]. This emperor persecuted the Christians cruelly, for he was filled with pagan impiety and hated the true God. He was more cruel than all the Roman pagan emperors who had preceded him. Under the reign of Maximian the Christians fell into great confusion, for the godless persecutor put to death all who confessed the name of Christ. Many of them, seeking to escape torment and death, fled from the fierce persecutors, abandoning their homes and cities, and hid themselves in secret places. There were not a few, however, who openly delivered themselves into the hands of their tormentors and bore their suffering with courage. Among the latter was the valiant Amphian, who, though a youth in bodily age (for he was not yet twenty years old), was a hundred-year-old elder in his understanding and courage.

At the time when, by the order of the godless pagan emperor, men specially sent came to Caesarea and began to summon each of the citizens of that city to the pagan temples to offer sacrifices to the idols there, the valiant Amphian, who was staying with the Christians in a hidden place, secretly left that place unknown to anyone and went to the idol temple, where at that time the governor Urbanus was offering sacrifice to the idols. Approaching him fearlessly, the holy Amphian took him by the right hand, in which he held the offering, and began to

3. Caesarea Palestinae – a city in Palestine on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. In antiquity Caesarea was the residence of the Roman procurators and the centre of the country's public and political life. In the history of the Christian Church, Caesarea Palestinae is remarkable for being the place where access to the Church of Christ was first opened to the Gentiles, through the Apostle Peter, who baptized the centurion Cornelius (Acts 10:1–48). Here too took place the last trial of the Apostle Paul, after which he was sent to Rome (Acts 25:1–27:44). In Palestine there was another Caesarea, which, unlike the one mentioned, was called Caesarea Philippi. It was situated at the source of the Jordan.

4. The Emperor Maximian reigned from 305 to 313.

5. The Emperor Maximian Galerius governed the Roman Empire from 306 to 311.

exhort him boldly, before everyone, to abandon his error and not to worship demons and idols made by human hands. This bold deed of the valiant Amphian strengthened many Christians still more firmly in the Christian faith, but it roused the pagans, and especially the governor himself, to great fury. Immediately the holy Amphian was seized by the governor's soldiers, like a sheep by wolves, and received from them countless blows to the lips, face and whole body; he was thrown to the ground and trampled underfoot, and then the saint was led to prison and bound in chains.

On the following morning the holy Amphian was brought to trial before the governor, who urged him to offer sacrifice to the idols. But the holy Amphian remained unshaken in confessing the faith of Christ. After this the holy martyr of Christ was subjected to grievous torments: the soldiers hanged him on a tree and began to tear his whole body with sharp iron instruments and to beat his face, neck and sides with iron rods. The face and whole body of the holy martyr were so mangled by the tormentors that even his acquaintances did not recognize him; all his ribs were broken. But even amid these grievous sufferings the holy martyr of Christ did not cease to confess Jesus Christ with a loud voice, as though not hearing or feeling his torments and sufferings.

Meanwhile the tormentors intensified his sufferings: they bound the saint's feet with flax soaked in oil and set this flax on fire. The sufferer burned, melting like wax. But the holy martyr was not terrified even by this torment; on the contrary, growing in ever greater boldness, he began still more loudly to glorify Jesus Christ, at the same time rebuking and reproaching the impiety and godlessness of the pagans. Then the holy martyr was again shut up in prison.

After this, on the third day after the holy Amphian's imprisonment, the tormentors again began to test the firmness of the martyr's faith with new torments. But since the saint again remained unbending in confessing the faith of Christ, the governor commanded that he be put to death by being cast into the depths of the sea. The soldiers tied a stone to the martyr's body and, carrying him a considerable distance from the shore, threw him into the sea. Immediately the sea was stirred

up, the earth shook, that city trembled, and all the pagans there were filled with great fear and terror. Afterwards the waves of the sea brought the body of the holy martyr up from the depths onto the land.

Thus ended the sufferings of the holy martyr Amphian, on the second day of the month of April[6].

After this many other Christians were taken for torment, among them Amphian's brother Edesius. Some of the Christians were subjected to manifold torments and sufferings, while others were sent by the pagans to Palestine to work in the copper mines; among the latter was the holy Edesius.

A year later the holy Edesius was led from Palestine to the Egyptian city of Alexandria. Seeing here once the pagan prince Hierocles sitting on the judgment seat and raging exceedingly against the Christians (he delivered chaste Christian virgins and wives to be outraged by the pagans), the holy Edesius was filled with courage and boldness; rushing at that prince, the holy Edesius, in the presence of all, struck him on the face, then threw him to the ground, continuing to strike him and at the same time rebuking him loudly for his unrighteous judgment. Immediately the holy Edesius was seized by the soldiers present there and handed over to torment, like his brother, the holy Amphian. After prolonged torments the holy Edesius was put to the same death as his brother, being drowned in the sea. Thus the holy Edesius also received the holy crown of martyrdom together with Amphian, being rewarded with it by Christ our Savior, to Whom glory is offered with the Father and the Holy Spirit, forever. Amen.

* * *

Commemoration of our Venerable Father Titus the Wonderworker

Память преподобного отца нашего Тита чудотворца

Our blessed father Titus, who from his early years loved Christ and hated the world, labored in a coenobitic monastery[7]. Having taken upon himself the monastic habit, he here endured with great pa-

6. The repose of the holy martyr took place in 306.

tience the sorrowful and thorny path of the monastic life. For his great virtue of humility and obedience, in which the Venerable Titus surpassed all the brethren of that monastery, he was raised to the rank of presbyter, the shepherd of the rational sheep.

The Venerable Titus was filled with great love for his neighbors. Keeping himself pure both in soul and body from his earliest youth, the holy Titus appeared as it were an Angel of God on earth. For his virtuous life the Venerable Titus was granted by God the gift of wonder-working. Shining with the virtues of the monastic life, the holy Titus was at the same time an unshakable pillar of Orthodoxy, since he zealously defended the holy Church against the attacks of the heretical iconoclasts[8]. Having lived long enough and having shown his followers a worthy example of ascetic life, the Venerable Titus departed in peace to the Lord[9].

* * *

Commemoration of the holy martyr Polycarp, who suffered in Alexandria in 2363 under the emperor Maximian

Память святого мученика Поликарпа, пострадавшего в Александрии 2363 при императоре Максимиане

The holy Polycarp rebuked the governor of Alexandria for unjustly shedding the innocent blood of Christians, for which he was subjected to manifold torments. But since the holy Polycarp remained a firm and valiant confessor of the name of Christ even amid his tortures, he was, by the governor's command, beheaded with the sword[10].

7. Cenobium ("coenobion," from "koinos," common, and "bios," life) is the name given to communal monasteries, in which the brethren receive their full maintenance from the monastery, but in return have no property of their own, offering their labour and its fruits for the common good of the monastery.

8. The iconoclastic heresy arose in the eighth century and was founded by Constantine, bishop of Nacolia, in Phrygia. Unreasonably confusing the veneration of icons with idolatry, the iconoclasts sought to eradicate it from the Orthodox Church by persistent and cruel persecution of icon veneration. The most zealous defenders of iconoclasm were the emperors Leo the Isaurian (717–741) and Constantine Copronymus (741–775). This heresy was condemned at the Seventh Ecumenical Council, held in 787 at Nicaea.

9. The repose of the Venerable Titus took place in the ninth century.

* * *



10. The repose of the holy martyr took place at the beginning of the fourth century.

THE THIRD DAY OF APRIL

April 3

3 апреля

New Calendar April 3 · Old Calendar April 16 (civil dates)

Life of Our Venerable Father Nicetas the Confessor

Житие преподобного отца нашего Никиты Исповедника

Venerable Nicetas was a native of Caesarea in Bithynia[1], born to pious parents. His father, Philaret, having lost his wife, who departed to the Lord on the eighth day after the birth of the boy Nicetas, took the monastic tonsure; the boy was reared by his father's mother, who was still living at that time. Having reached the age of discretion and received a book-learning, Venerable Nicetas dedicated himself to the service of God. At first he served in the church as a sexton[2], exercising himself in the reading of the Divine books; then he withdrew to a certain hermit named Stephen, a virtuous man. Having received sufficient instruction from him, Venerable Nicetas, on his counsel, went on to the Midikion monastery, founded by Venerable Nicephorus, who was also its abbot. The latter gladly received Nicetas, discerning in him the grace of God, and tonsured him into the monastic order. Here Venerable Nicetas soon surpassed all the monks by the labors of fasting, humility, obedience, and, in general, by his virtuous life. Not seven years had passed since his settling in the monastery when, at the urging of the superior, he accepted the rank of presbyter, into which he was ordained by the most holy Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople. Then Venerable Nicephorus, because of his feebleness

1. Bithynia is the northwestern region of Asia Minor, lying along the shores of the Black Sea, the Bosphorus and the Strait of Constantinople. The Midikion monastery was situated not far from the city of Prusa, which stood near Mount Olympus; the Midikion monastery was founded by St. Nicephorus, who attended the 7th Ecumenical Council (787) in the capacity of its abbot. Caesarea in Bithynia was situated between the rivers Rhyndacus and Apamea.
2. *Ponomari*, or otherwise *paramonari*, are the same as our church attendants.

of age, entrusted to Venerable Nicetas, despite his unwillingness, the governance of the monastery together with its seniority. And Venerable Nicetas governed the monastery for good in place of his father Nicephorus, vigilantly shepherding the rational flock and increasing it by the example of his virtuous life: many, hearing of his God-pleasing life, renounced the world, came to the monastery seeking the instruction of Venerable Nicetas on the path to salvation, and remained in it. By the grace of Christ, within a few years the number of brethren increased to one hundred.

Here was also the blessed Athanasius, a wondrous man, truly worthy of veneration. It is impossible to describe in brief words his virtue and the great love for God which he showed in renouncing the world. There was in him something to marvel at even for the Angels themselves. Despising this world and its lusts for God's sake, the blessed Athanasius secretly left his parental home for a certain monastery, desiring to begin the monastic labors; but his father, learning of it, hastened in fury to that monastery, took his son, whom he loved greatly, stripped him of the monastic garment assigned to novices, clothed him in bright, precious garments, and then forcibly led him home.

"Father," said the youth to him, "do you truly think that with these costly garments you will make me change my intention, when the whole world is hateful to me? 'For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' (Mt. 16:26)."

The father shut him up in a separate room and did everything he could to instill in his soul a love for the world. But he, conquering filial love and attachment to the vain world with love for God, cast off the worldly garments in which he had been clothed and tore them into small pieces. Seeing this, the father clothed him in others, even more costly, for he was rich, noble, and renowned. The youth treated the new garments just as he had the first. Such conduct of the blessed Athanasius drove his father into great fury; he mercilessly beat the naked Athanasius, and wounds covered his body in multitudes; his shoulders and spine began to fester from the cruel blows, so that physicians had

to treat him and cut away the rotted parts of his body. But the youth said:

"Even if my father were to crush me into pieces, he still would not separate me from the love of God (cf. Rom. 8:35), nor turn me from my purpose."

Then the father was softened, and after long weeping he said to Athanasius:

"Go, my child, on the good path you have chosen, and may Christ be your helper and deliverer from every snare of the enemy."

Athanasius returned to the former monastery, took upon himself the full monastic order, and so humbled himself that in him could be noticed neither a worldly word, nor custom, nor attachment to the acquisition of any objects. A meek and humble disposition, a quiet and gentle word, the most threadbare rags to cover the body distinguished Athanasius; his life, that of one who had received a delicate worldly upbringing as the son of wealthy parents, was pervaded by extreme austerity. Such a virtuous man, who had spent many years in monastic labors, was drawn to the Midikion monastery by love for our Venerable Father Nicetas and by the fame of his angel-like life; and for both venerable men, Nicephorus and Nicetas, the blessed Athanasius was a welcome companion and cohabitant. After some time, at their request, Athanasius accepted the office of economos in the monastery. As one soul and one mind in two bodies, the blessed Athanasius and Venerable Nicetas governed the monastery, instructing the brethren by word and example in every virtue, in the perfect pleasing of God: they planted love in the brethren, taught humility, were vigilant guardians of their purity, both of soul and of body, strengthened the weak and faint-hearted, confirmed those who stood, and restored those who fell by manifold admonitions and exhortations; and when one of them appeared to be a stern mentor, the other showed himself the gentlest and most merciful exhorter. Both were loved by all, and the brethren received their word as proceeding from the mouth of God.

But the pair of such virtuous guides did not live together to the end. Several years passed, and on the twenty-sixth day of October the Ven-

erable Athanasius departed to the Lord, having addressed the brethren with this last word:

"After my death you will be fully assured whether I have obtained, at least in some measure, grace with God."

When the Venerable Athanasius was buried, a cypress grew upon his grave from his very breast, by God's command, whose leaves completely healed all manner of infirmities. Afterward, too, Venerable Nicephorus, the founder and first abbot of the Midikion monastery, after many labors and bodily sicknesses, departed to the Lord on the fourth day of May.

Thus Venerable Nicetas was orphaned, having lost his spiritual father, St. Nicephorus, and his beloved friend, Venerable Athanasius; he grieved greatly over both, for he loved them very much. His consolation in sorrow was the firm hope that the departed had received grace and a blessed life from the Lord Christ, Whom they had pleased by good service from their youth.

After the repose of the blessed Father Nicephorus, all the brethren asked Venerable Nicetas to accept the rank and be named abbot: for, while Venerable Nicephorus was alive, St. Nicetas had not accepted the title and rank of abbot, although he had fully governed the monastery in place of his father St. Nicephorus, who had been infirm with age for many years. At the urgent requests of the brethren, and especially at the urging of many fathers of other monasteries, he accepted this rank and received the blessing of the most holy Patriarch of Constantinople Nicephorus, who was the successor of Tarasius. To his former labors Venerable Nicetas added new ones, when with God's help he began to govern the monastery as abbot, concerned for the salvation of the souls entrusted to him. Glorifying His servant, God granted him the grace to heal infirmities and cast out demons. By marking with the cross a boy who had been mute from birth, Venerable Nicetas restored to him the gift of speech; a monk who had lost his reason he healed by anointing with holy oil; one of the newly received, a demoniac, he delivered from demonic torment by prayer, and drove out the demon which had appeared as a serpent; another, likewise possessed, he freed from the evil spirit; and many who suffered from fever, fever-chills, and various oth-

er diseases he miraculously healed by the grace of Christ dwelling in him. Thus he lived, pleasing God, and reached old age; and before the end of his life he showed himself a valiant confessor and endured suffering for the veneration of the holy icons.

In those times the heresy of iconoclasm had not yet ceased. Condemned by the holy fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council[3], it was as if renewed, receiving once more help from the imperial power, from which it had begun. The first of the Greek iconoclast emperors was Leo, the third to bear that name, surnamed the Isaurian[4]; from him the iconoclastic heresy received strength and multiplied like a harmful disease. He was the first to issue the decree to reject icons, and, using his imperial authority, he induced many to false thinking; having expelled the orthodox Patriarch, St. Germanus, he raised to the throne the heretic Anastasius, who shared his mind[5]. After the death of this impious emperor, his son Constantine Copronymus[6] ascended the throne, an even stronger persecutor of the Church of God: he not only rejected the holy icons, but also forbade the naming of the saints of God as saints, and reckoned their relics as nothing.

To speak briefly: this emperor appeared a Christian only outwardly, while in his soul he was a thoroughly unbelieving Jew. The Most Pure Mother of God, higher than every creature, the protection and refuge of the whole world, he, the wretch, dared to revile, rejecting Her all-holy name and Her honorable icons; and her intercession before God, by which the whole world exists, he forbade even to mention. To mock the Mother of God he would show a sack full of gold coins and ask those standing before him:

"Is this sack precious?"

Those standing before him answered:

3. The Seventh Ecumenical Council was convened in 787 at Nicaea by the Empress Irene, widow of Leo IV. The Council, consisting of 367 fathers, under the presidency of St. Tarasius, condemned iconoclasm and restored the veneration of icons.

4. Leo III the Isaurian. – *Redaction of the "Alphabet of Faith"*

5. Leo III the Isaurian, 716–741; St. Germanus, 730; Anastasius, 753. Then, until the restoration of the veneration of icons on the Constantinopolitan throne, ten patriarchs succeeded one another, of whom six were iconoclasts.

6. Constantine V Copronymus, reigned from 741 to 775.

"It is as precious as the gold it contains."

Having poured the gold out of the sack, Copronymus asked again:

"Is the sack valuable now, without the gold?"

They answered him:

"What good is it, then, when there are no coins in it? An empty sack is worth nothing."

Then Copronymus said:

– So too Mary: so long as she bore Christ in her womb, she was worthy of honor; but once she had given Him birth, she lost that honor, and she differs in nothing from other women.

O most vile lips and most impious tongue! What blasphemy did he dare to utter against the Mother of the Creator, the most honored of all the heavenly powers and the most holy of all the saints! Is a queen, having borne a royal son, no longer worthy of royal honors? Is the mother of a king honored only so long as she carries the king in her womb? Woe to the wretched blasphemer, who differed in nothing from the blasphemers, the abominable Jews! Not only was he himself such a blasphemer, but with flattering promises and terrible prohibitions he also urged others to the same impious blasphemy, while those who were disobedient and resisted him he subjected to various torments: he tormented them with chains and prolonged hunger, tore their bodies with dreadful wounds, cut them down with the sword, burned them with fire, drowned them in the depths of the sea. In a word, by every possible means he inflicted unbearable torments and bitter death upon the faithful and true servants of Christ. For this, he himself breathed out his wretched soul in a dreadful death, and at his last breath uttered a bitter cry:

– I am alive, given over to the unquenchable fire!

And he who had formerly blasphemed the Most Pure Mother of God now commanded that She be honored with hymns; but, utterly rejected by the mercy of God, he no longer found any consolation for himself.

When this tormentor perished (in shame), his son Leo, the fourth to bear that name, ascended the throne. He too was an iconoclast heretic, like his father, but he too died soon after. After him, his wife Irene[7]

took the kingdom together with their young son Constantine. She restored peace to the Holy Church, convening the Seventh Ecumenical Council to condemn the iconoclast heresy. The whole Church of Christ rejoiced, receiving back its original adornment along with the icons, and seeing Orthodox emperors and archpastors upon their thrones. After Irene, Nicephorus reigned, and then Michael, both Orthodox. Then Leo, surnamed the Armenian[8], the fifth to bear that name, ascended the throne. Imitating the earlier impious Leo the Isaurian, who bore the same name, he, like him, raised persecution against the Orthodox and the saints, thus renewing and restoring the iconoclast heresy that had already been condemned. He sought helpers, like-minded false teachers, and found several courtiers, of whom the most devoted to the iconoclast heresy were two: John, surnamed Spectus, and Eutychian. From among the clergy he won to his side John, surnamed the Grammarian, a new Tertullus[9], a chosen vessel of the devil, and a certain Antony Siley; from the monastic order, Leontius and Zosimas, who some time later was convicted of debauchery, punished by the cutting off of his nose, and died in disgrace, leaving behind an evil reputation. With them the emperor confirmed himself in heresy, and they, by their counsels, encouraged him to the war he had already begun to wage against the Church.

Having gathered from all over his land to Constantinople the bishops and the rest of the clergy, Leo summoned to his palace the most holy Patriarch Nicephorus with the entire sacred council, wishing that before him and in the presence of all the courtiers they should hold a disputation with the above-named like-minded associates of the emperor, who were still secret heretics. At first the emperor himself began the conversation with the Orthodox; pretending to be Orthodox, he took from his breast the icon of the Crucifixion of Christ which he wore, hypocritically bowed his head before it, and said to the holy fathers:

– For my part I differ in nothing from you, for I honor the holy icon, as you yourselves see; but others have appeared who teach otherwise

7. Leo IV, 775–785; Irene, 797–802.
8. Nicephorus I, 802–811; Michael I, 811–818; Leo V the Armenian, 813–820.

and say that their path is the right one. Let them come forward here before you, and by way of questions and answers let the correct teaching about the icons be revealed. If in the dispute they prove more just, persuading by evident arguments that their opinion agrees with the truth, then you ought not only not to oppose a good work but even to further it; but if they are defeated by you and convicted of error, then let them cease to spread their pernicious teaching. And then, as before, let the former teaching about the icons remain. I myself will be the listener and judge of your mutual disputation; for if it befits me to judge lesser matters, how much more must I concern myself with the governance of the Church? I will hear you, and I must hear the other side as well — and on whichever side, in my judgment, the truth lies, that is the side I shall follow.

But the most holy patriarch and all the bishops with him by no means agreed to this; they wished neither to hold a disputation with the heretics of evil doctrine nor even to see them, and would not consent to their appearing before them.

– This heresy has already been examined and condemned with anathema by the holy fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council; there is no need to examine it further, nor to restore into the Church what has been entirely rejected by it.

Seeing, however, that the emperor was very inclined to false belief and was aiding the heretics, the holy fathers spoke to him boldly. Saint Emilian, Bishop of Cyzicus[10], said:

– Emperor! If the question for which you have summoned us, the examination of the right faith, is an ecclesiastical question, it is fitting to discuss it, according to custom, in the holy church and not in the imperial palace.

The emperor objected:

9. The rhetorician (teacher of eloquence) Tertullus supported, before the Roman governor Felix, the accusation raised by the Jews against the Apostle Paul, and in his speech he took care first of all to flatter Felix, as supposedly the champion of the needs of the Jews (Acts 24:1–27).
10. Cyzicus, a city situated on one of the islands of the Propontis, founded by Milesians 5 centuries B.C.

– But I too am a son of the Church, and I will hear you as a mediator and reconciler, so that, weighing the arguments of both sides, I may come to know the truth itself.

To this Saint Michael, Bishop of Synada, replied:

– If you are a mediator and reconciler, why do you not do what befits a mediator and reconciler? You gather those who oppose the teaching of the Church, keep them in your palace, and give them boldness to instruct everyone fearlessly, so that they may hold to impious dogmas! And the Orthodox, fearing your terrible prohibitions, dare not even speak in the corners in defense of Orthodoxy. This is the sign not of mediation and reconciliation, but of persecution and torment.

– For my part, – the emperor replied, – I reason, as I have said, in the same way as you; but since it has reached me that there is doubt concerning the veneration of icons, it is fitting that I not pass it over in silence, but strive to learn the truth. What, then, is the reason that you do not want to converse with your opponents? Evidently, that you are ignorant and do not have those testimonies from Divine Scripture with which you could defend your opinion.

Then Saint Theophylact, Bishop of Nicomedia, said:

– Christ, whose icon you now have before your eyes, is witness that we possess countless proofs of our Orthodox faith, confirming the pious veneration of the holy icons; but no one listens to us, and it is hard for us to have any success in a struggle against a royal hand, against a power that lays a prohibition upon us.

Then Saint Peter, Bishop of Nicaea, turned to the emperor:

– How do you invite us to hold a disputation with those whom you help and with whom you yourself attack us? Or do you not know that even if you had brought in the Manichaeans[11] and wished to help them, they, under your protection, would easily have gained the upper hand over us?

11. The Manichaeans taught that in the world there exist two kingdoms, of good and of evil, in constant struggle with one another, and that in man there are two souls, a good one and an evil one; that Christ had no body and suffered only in appearance; they admitted the transmigration of souls.

Even bolder words were spoken by Saint Euthymius, Bishop of Sardis.

– Hear, O emperor! For more than eight hundred years, since Christ our Lord came down to earth, He has been depicted everywhere in the churches by iconography and honored in His image. Who is so proud as to dare to change or abolish a tradition preserved for so many years in the churches and handed down to our time through the holy Apostles, martyrs, and God-inspired fathers? The Apostle says: "So then, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or by our epistle" (2 Thess. 2:15). And again: "If we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel other than what we preached to you, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:8). Therefore, in the pious reign of Irene and Constantine, the Ecumenical Council was convened against the first iconoclast heretics, and the Son of God Himself marked that council with His finger; whoever dares to violate or annul anything decreed by that council, let him be accursed.

Although these words aroused a terrible anger in the emperor, he listened patiently, hypocritically pretending to be meek. Saint Theodore, the zealous teacher of the Church and abbot of the Stoudios Monastery, also dared to speak fearlessly:

– Emperor! Do not destroy the ecclesiastical order established for the good. The holy Apostle Paul says that God gave in the Church "some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints" (Eph. 4:11–12); the Apostle did not add kings here. You, emperor, have been entrusted with governing worldly affairs, the state, and the military forces; attend to these, and leave the governance of the Church, according to the Apostolic teaching, to the pastors and teachers. If you do not do so, know that even if an angel from heaven were to bring a teaching contrary to our true faith, we would not listen to him, much less to you, a mortal man.

Then the emperor was greatly angered, and, reckoning the words of the holy fathers as blasphemy and insult to himself, he revealed the inner fury which until then he had concealed beneath a feigned meekness. Having driven the entire Holy Council from the palace with dishonor

and abuse, he then unjustly deposed from the throne the righteous shepherd, the most holy Patriarch Nicephorus, and dealt likewise with the other Orthodox hierarchs, sending them all into exile in various lands and places, and the Venerable Theodore the Studite as well. Upon the patriarchal throne of Constantinople he raised one of his counselors, the layman Theodotus, surnamed Cassiteras, an heretic in faith, a man of sinful life, who kept by him a certain female slave skilled in medicine, ostensibly for the healing of his ailment (he said he was sick in the stomach), but in truth for the sake of sin. Likewise, upon the other thrones the emperor, after expelling the Orthodox, installed his own false bishops of heretical faith, and he cast the holy icons out of the holy churches. And there began anew against the Orthodox the same persecution for the veneration of icons that had been under Leo the Isaurian and his son Copronymus.

The emperor-heretic Leo the Armenian and the patriarch Theodotus, a false patriarch of one mind with him, convened at Constantinople their lawless assembly, and, themselves under anathema, they cursed the Orthodox, the divine and blessed holy fathers, and they subjected to various torments and death those who would not agree with that unrighteous assembly. When the heretical gathering had ended, the emperor summoned to himself the abbots of the chief monasteries, and among them the divine father of ours, Nicetas, of whom we are speaking. At first, with flattering speeches, he sought to win them over to his heresy; but then, seeing that they would not submit to his will, he confined them in various prisons, each one separately, and pondered: what was to be done with them next?

And the Venerable Nicetas remained for many days in a foul-smelling prison. Already this very foul prison confinement was no small torment for the saint; moreover, each day there came to him various men, unseemly and shameless in manner and speech, unworthy even of the name of man. With blasphemous and obscene words they dishonored and reviled the holy elder and caused him great offense. These men had been deliberately sent by the heretics; among them the worst was one named Nicholas, who especially grieved the Venerable by insulting him with mad and profane speech, until there appeared to him

in a dream his father, who had died long before, saying: "Leave the servant of God alone." From that time Nicholas ceased his idle chatter, and not only did he himself no longer trouble the saint, but he did not allow others to trouble him either. The Venerable spent many days in the sufferings of the prison; then the emperor commanded that he be led into exile in an eastern land, to the city of Masaleon. It was a fierce winter, and the elder endured many hardships in his poor garments from frost, snow and wind. Moreover, the guard who led him into exile proved to be a cruel man, devoid of all compassion: he wore the elder down during the journey, forcing him to hurry so as to cover a very long road in a short time.

The emperor dealt likewise with the other honorable abbots, sending each of them separately into exile. Then, reflecting within himself that by keeping in confinement those who were above all sorrow he would not only fail to achieve success but would even provoke them to hold to their teaching all the more zealously, the emperor, unsteady of mind, changed his intention. Scarcely had the Venerable Nicetas lived five days in Masaleon as an exile when the emperor commanded that he, and the other abbots as well, be returned at once to Byzantium. The return journey was accomplished even more swiftly than the first, so that the saint barely survived the rapid travel and the great cold. When all the abbots had been brought to Byzantium, the emperor ordered that they be kept under guard until he decided by what means to draw them into agreement with himself. The winter passed, and the holy Great Lent and the bright feast of holy Pascha came; then the emperor handed the prisoners over to the aforementioned John the Grammarian, who had taught rhetoric with diabolical lips, so that he might torment them as he wished. Shutting each of them up separately in various prisons, he tormented them no less than the pagans tormented the saints. The prisons were cramped, dark and foul-smelling, and they caused grievous suffering to the captives, who had no comforts whatever, not even beds. Through a small window they were given, as to dogs, impure and rotten bread, only eight zolotniks a day, just enough that they would not die of hunger, and muddy, foul-smelling water. By holding the fathers in such want, the tormentor John intended either to van-

quish them, or to force them into agreement with himself, or to starve them to death. To the still greater grief of the Venerable Nicetas, the wicked John seized his former disciple, who had only just reached youthful years, named Theoctistus; he too was thrown into a grievous prison, and tormented with hunger and thirst. The heretics, seeing that the fathers were ready to die rather than depart from their orthodoxy, devised such a stratagem against them. They said:

"We require nothing else of you, except that you partake of the Holy Mysteries only once in church with the patriarch Theodotus; you will do nothing more, and you will go freely each to his own monastery, with his own faith and his own opinions."

Misled by this cunning of the heretics, the fathers to some degree inclined to their wish. Afterward, having become convinced of the deceit, they fully repented and returned to the good path. After each of them was released from his special prison confinement and imprisonment, they came to the Venerable Father Nicetas and began to persuade and beseech him to consent to enter into communion with Theodotus and to come out of the prison. The holy Nicetas did not agree to leave the prison confinement he endured for Christ, and by no means wished to fulfill the fathers' request; but the fathers insisted, saying:

"It is impossible for us to leave here and leave you here: they demand only a small thing of us—merely to partake together with Theodotus; our faith will remain in us. In the present grievous circumstances, it is better to permit ourselves a small thing than to lose everything."

Thus they long and importunately pressed and compelled Nicetas; the Venerable, not from a desire to escape sufferings nor from fear of torments, but out of the earnest entreaties of the fathers, and in honor of their gray hairs, against his own will yielded to their admonitions and came out. Life and death lay before him; and although he would more gladly have chosen death for Orthodoxy than life, nevertheless he did not disobey at that time that honorable company, whose right faith and virtuous life were known to him.

All together they went to the false patriarch; the latter, in order to ensnare them more easily into communion with himself, led them into a certain place of prayer, deliberately adorned with icons, so that the fathers, at the sight of the holy icons, might conclude that the patriarch was Orthodox. There Theodotus celebrated the Divine Liturgy; they received Communion from his hands, and they heard from his lips such words: "Whoever does not venerate the icons of Christ, let him be anathema." The patriarch said this not because he himself venerated the icon of the Savior, but out of hypocrisy, before the fathers, so that they would not doubt that they could have communion with him. Afterward, when all had gone to their monasteries, the Venerable Nicetas began to grieve in his heart that he had had communion with the false patriarch Theodotus, a hypocritical deceiver: the slight deviation from the right path he counted to himself as complete error. He resolved to withdraw to another country and there repent of his transgression. Boarding a ship, he sailed to an island called Proconnesus (in the Sea of Marmara, now Marmara). But afterward he reasoned within himself: where there was transgression, there must also be repentance—and he returned to Byzantium.

Walking openly about the city, the Venerable Nicetas fearlessly taught the people to hold to the right dogmas established by the holy fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. The emperor learned of this, summoned the saint to himself and asked:

"Why did you not go to your monastery, as the other abbots did? Why did you alone remain of your own will, not obeying, as I hear, our command? Or do you count our authority as nothing? Carry out our command and go to your monastery; if you do not go, I will order you to be tortured."

The saint answered meekly:

"O Emperor! To my monastery I will not go, my faith I will not abandon; I hold, and will continue to hold, to my confession; this is held by my fathers, the holy Orthodox bishops, who without fault endure from you exile, bonds and many afflictions, defending the Orthodox Church, in which we abide and take comfort in the hope of the glory of God. Know then with certainty concerning me that it was not from fear

of death nor from love of temporal life that I did what ought not to have been done, but out of obedience I submitted to the elders and against my will: only fulfilling their desire did I enter into communion with the false patriarch Theodotus, for which I now grieve and of which I repent. Be fully assured that henceforth I have no communion whatever with you: I hold to the tradition of the holy fathers which I received at the first. Do with me what you will, and do not expect to hear from me anything else."

The Emperor, seeing the firmness of his conviction, handed him over to a certain Zacharias, the chamberlain of the imperial palaces called Mangana, that he might keep him under guard until the decision. Zacharias was a good and pious man; he not only caused the elder no grief whatsoever, but even showed him much honor. Afterwards the Emperor sent the Venerable Nicetas into exile on the island of the holy Martyr Glyceria. This small island was named after the holy martyr because her holy relics lay there, and a great church and monastery had been built in her name. The monastery had been entrusted by the heretical authorities to a certain eunuch named Anthimus. This man was in no way distinguished by kindness; he was a sorcerer, a sacrilegious man capable of evil, hostile, crafty, proud and merciless, and the local inhabitants, on account of his savagery and wicked disposition, called him Caiaphas. Men of this kind were then appointed to govern monasteries, so that, with the support of the secular power, they might change everything at their own will. Anthimus received the saint who had been sent to him and, using the authority given him by those who had sent him, tormented him zealously. Having shut the servant of God in the most cramped dungeon, he subjected him to unceasing torments, not even allowing him to look out of the dungeon; he himself carried the key to it, and ordered his meagre food to be passed to him through a very narrow opening. The leaders of the heretics promised this Anthimus much if he should compel the Venerable Nicetas to agree with them, and the wretch on this account especially harassed the saint, hoping by compulsion to bring him to heretical thinking. But the Venerable bore the evil done to him for piety with love; and God revealed in him His wondrous grace and showed that he was a righteous

and holy man and a wonderworking helper of men in their afflictions. The aforementioned Zacharias, when he was sent by the Emperor to the Thracian lands on public business, fell into the hands of barbarians, who led him into captivity. Hearing of this, St. Michael, Bishop of Synada, who was also held in prison for Orthodoxy, sent word to the Venerable Nicetas:

"Our common friend Zacharias has been bound and carried off into a barbarian land; I beg you, pray to God for him, for you can do this."

Receiving such news, the saint was deeply saddened and ate no food that whole day; in the evening, however, he took a candle from the brother Philip who served him, lit it, and stood in prayer the whole night, entreating the merciful God to free the captive Zacharias from the hands of the barbarians. And it was revealed to him by God that Zacharias would soon go free. In the morning Philip came, saw that the father was bright of countenance and joyful in spirit, and said to him:

"Father! Yesterday I left you very sorrowful and grieved, and now I see you joyful. I beg you, tell me the cause of this change of yours from sorrow to joy."

The saint answered:

"I rejoice that we shall soon see here our friend Zacharias."

So it came to pass. A few days went by; the Greek emperor concluded peace with the barbarians, and from both sides they began to exchange captives. In sending captives for exchange, the Emperor did not have Zacharias in mind, for he had already learned that he held to the dogmas of the Seventh Ecumenical Council and gave help to the Orthodox; therefore he left him in the hands of the barbarians, to perish there. When the barbarians released many Greek captives but Zacharias remained, the barbarian leader said to him:

"Do you wish to go home?"

"I would very much," Zacharias answered, "but it has not pleased our Emperor to deliver me from this captivity."

The leader said:

"I set you free; go according to your desire."

Seeing that the barbarian leader had shown him such unexpected mercy, Zacharias recognized that God Himself was arranging this

through the prayers of the holy fathers to whom he had once shown kindness. Filled with boldness, he said to the leader:

"If it pleases you to set me free, then grant me also another captive, who has the same name as I and is my fellow countryman, and who was bound with me."

The leader answered:

"Take him too, and go both of you in peace to your homeland."

Thus was Zacharias set free. Arriving with his friend on the island to the Venerable Father Nicetas, he gave thanks for the holy prayers through which God had delivered them from barbarian captivity. This holy father worked yet another most glorious miracle: by his fervent prayer to God he saved from drowning and brought safely to land three brothers who, sailing on the sea in one boat, were suddenly overtaken by a storm in the night. Thus, though himself a prisoner in bonds and in affliction, he miraculously delivered others from bonds and afflictions.

The Venerable suffered in the dungeon for six years, until the death of the God-hated Emperor Leo the Armenian. When the latter was suddenly slain by his soldiers and Michael of Amorium, surnamed Travlius, or Balbus, ascended the throne, the holy fathers began to be released from bonds and imprisonment into freedom; then the Venerable Father Nicetas, Abbot of the Midikion Monastery, a martyr without the shedding of blood, a courageous confessor of Orthodoxy, an invincible warrior of Christ, was also set free. He did not go to his monastery, but settled in a secluded place not far north of Byzantium, desiring to live in silence. There, after his long sufferings, he lived a short time, but worked many wondrous benefactions by the power of all-healing grace. Before his death, after all the very painful sufferings he had endured in exile, he fell ill for the last time, received the Divine Mysteries on the Saturday, and on the Sunday at dawn he reposed in the Lord on the 3rd day of the month of April[12].

News of his holy death immediately became known in the capital and its environs. Soon from the city and from everywhere a multitude

12. In 824.

of people of both sexes and of both estates, clerical and lay, gathered, the brethren from the Midikion and other monasteries came, and two bishops, St. Theophilus of Ephesus and St. Joseph of Thessalonica, came as well; having prepared the honorable body of the holy father according to custom, they laid it in a reliquary, carried it onto a ship and conveyed it to the Midikion Monastery. The blessed Paul, Bishop of Plusias, with a multitude of monks and laymen, met the body on the shore, lifted it upon their shoulders and carried it to the monastery. Wondrous miracles took place along the way: the sick received healing and the possessed were freed from evil spirits; a woman who had long suffered from a flow of blood was healed merely by touching the holy relics of the Venerable. With the chanting of psalms and fitting hymns in common, they laid the Venerable on the left side of the narthex, in the tomb of the earlier deceased holy father Nicephorus, the first abbot of that monastery. And after the burial many miracles also took place, and healings were granted to those who came in faith, to the glory of Christ our God, who is glorified in His saints, to Whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be honor and glory and worship from all, now and always and unto ages of ages, amen.

* * *

ALSO COMMEMORATED THIS DAY

On the same day is the commemoration of the Venerable Illyricus the Wonderworker, and of the holy martyrs Elpidiphorus, Dius, Vionius and Galicus.

THE FOURTH DAY OF APRIL

April 4

4 апреля

New Calendar April 4 · Old Calendar April 17 (civil dates)

Memory of Our Venerable Father Joseph, Hymnographer and Composer of Canons

Память преподобного отца нашего Иосифа, песнописца и творца канонов

St. Joseph's homeland was Sicily[1]. His parents, Plotinus and Agatha, were pious and virtuous people; for their God-pleasing life the Lord granted them such a son, who, as an outstanding composer of canons, adorned the Church for her good with sacred hymns. The youth was brought up in good learning and good conduct, and already in his childhood customs one could see the sign that, when he became a man, he would attain perfection in the virtues: he was meek, quiet and humble, and he shunned the games of boys; from childhood, having come to love fasting and abstinence, he sought no delicate foods, nourishing himself only with bread and water, and that only in the evening; he studied the Divine Scripture very successfully. Thus Joseph grew in body and spirit, when there occurred an invasion of barbarians into the land of Sicily, and his parents were compelled to flee their homeland to other lands. At first Joseph went with them to the Peloponnese, but afterward, leaving his parents, he withdrew to Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia; here he entered a monastery, was tonsured into the monastic order, and learned the labors of asceticism, diligently passing through all the forms of ascetic monastic life and virtues; and he became a perfect man and an experienced monk. The earth, covered with a hide, served him as a bed, a tattered garment as his clothing; his fasting was great, his food a small piece of bread

1. Sicily — one of the large islands of the Mediterranean Sea, south of the Apennine Peninsula, separated from it by the Strait of Messina.

and a little water, his standing the all-night vigil, his kneeling unceasing; always singing was on his lips, and work in his hands. Diligently he read the Divine books, was filled with wisdom and spiritual understanding, and, like an Angel of God, shone among the brethren as an example of a pure and holy life. It is impossible to recount in detail his good deeds and many labors.

Thus he labored for God more than others. At the urging of the abbot and the brethren, he accepted the dignity of the priesthood, being ordained a presbyter by the Bishop of Thessalonica. Being a presbyter, he intensified still more his labors and struggles, and often celebrated the Divine Liturgy, praying with tears for himself and for the whole world. The Venerable Gregory the Decapolite[2] came to the monastery; seeing the Venerable Joseph, he came to love him greatly as a holy man and acquired in him a friend and companion. Some time passed, and Gregory, setting out for Byzantium to strengthen the faithful who were being troubled by the heretics, asked the abbot and the brethren to release Joseph to go with him as a help; for he did not wish to be separated from him. But the brethren and the abbot also did not wish to lose such a companion, a true servant of God. Nevertheless, out of respect for the request of the great elder and heeding the needs of the Church, which was troubled by the storm of heresy, they released the blessed Joseph to go with St. Gregory the Decapolite to Byzantium.

On arriving there, Joseph and Gregory settled beside the church of the holy martyrs Sergius and Bacchus and, vying with one another, led a harsh and exhausting life—especially the blessed Joseph, who imitated the elder ascetic, the great father Gregory; taking him as his model, he resolved in his heart to perfect himself in virtue unceasingly. Both labored, diligently instructing the pious to guard themselves from the harmful heresy, not to be troubled or to doubt the dogmas of the right faith, and to be steadfast in confessing the truth. At that time the impious emperor Leo the Armenian had revived the already condemned[3] iconoclastic heresy and raised a great persecution against the Church; he removed the holy icons from the churches of God, trampling

2. His memory is commemorated November 20.
3. At the Seventh Ecumenical Council

them shamefully underfoot; the heretics of one mind with him he set on the thrones of the Orthodox pastors, whom he cast down, and in doing so tormented and destroyed some of them by various means.

Then St. Gregory and St. Joseph, arming themselves in the armor of faith, began to go about the city streets, squares and the houses of the faithful, with counsel, exhortation and entreaty not to be seduced by heretical cunning. And their words were like the morning dew, when it revives the flowers and the grass of the field withering from the day's heat: they revived the human hearts that were faint-hearted, doubting, and as if withering from the heat of heretical teachings. Afterward many monastics approached the Venerable Gregory with a request that he send the blessed Joseph—as skilled in speech and capable, by his bodily strength, of undertaking the labor of a long journey—to ancient Rome, to the Orthodox Pope Leo III[4] and to all the Orthodox there, to report the persecution raised in Constantinople against the holy Church. They reckoned that the Orthodox from Rome would render help to the persecuted, refute the unrighteous dogmas, and stop the blasphemous mouths of the heretics. The Venerable Gregory, in conversation with the blessed Joseph, gave him such counsel:

"Child, the time has now come to show your heartfelt love for God and zeal for piety; go to ancient Rome and report to the head of the Christians there and to all the Orthodox in the West what calamity the wicked emperor, a beast by name, has brought upon the holy Eastern Church, how he has offended and trampled the icon of Christ and of His Most Pure Mother, taken from the Church her adornment, expelled the innocent good pastors, and entrusted Christ's flock to false hireling pastors and ravening wolves, so that now the sheep are being scattered and driven apart. Report how, day after day, a furious storm raised by the sovereign is troubling the Church of Christ, and a fierce Lion come from Armenia utters threats and devours many by his heretical cunning. Report, persuade and beseech, that the Orthodox may draw the sword of the word of God and stand against those who persecute us."

Thus, and things similar to this, said St. Gregory. The blessed Joseph, having from youth fully accustomed himself to obedience, did

not object in the least; humbly bowing his head, he asked Gregory for his fatherly prayers and blessing for the journey, boarded a ship and sailed to Rome.

But other things were pleasing to the inscrutable judgments of God. God orders all things for good, and often through such circumstances as seem to us unfavorable and cruel, He accomplishes wondrous and glorious deeds to the glorification of His holy Name. Thus, by God's providence, an obstacle arose to Joseph's journey to Rome. The accomplices of Emperor Leo the Armenian, the servants and helpers of their persecution, learning that many, pursued by iconoclasm, were fleeing the capital to other lands, began secretly to set up brigand ambushes along the water and land routes, in order to seize the fugitives and return them into the hands of the iconoclasts. It did not remain hidden from them either that the Venerable Joseph was being sent by the Orthodox monks to the West, to Rome; they incited sea pirates to attack him, and the Venerable Joseph fell into the hands of his enemies. They wrecked the ship, seized also all the companions of the Venerable Joseph, and carried them to Crete, to the iconoclasts, where the Venerable Joseph, burdened with heavy chains, was cast into prison. Here, day and night, he comforted his fellow prisoners with God-inspired speech, of whom many suffered together with him for the right faith; himself rejoicing in bonds for the Lord, he said to the others:

"What can be sweeter and more joyful than those bonds with which we are burdened for the love of Christ and His holy icon? If a brief imprisonment causes us some sorrow, we ought for this suffering to thank God, setting before ourselves the bright example of St. Paul, who ineffably rejoiced that he was counted worthy to suffer in chains for the Name of Jesus Christ, and esteemed them as precious stones and golden ornaments. Moreover, we are 'called to this, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in His steps. He committed no sin, and no guile was found in His mouth. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges right-

4. Leo (Leon) III, 816

eously' (1 Pet. 2:21–23), as the chief Apostle St. Peter says. True, bodily sufferings cause some grief, but one cannot call the bearer of Christ's yoke him who does not follow Him and does not endure, at least in part, those sufferings which He endured for us. Being the almighty God, He could have saved man also by some other means, yet He was pleased that from labor and suffering there should be born that power of virtue which would be able to open the heavenly gates long closed. Nor did He show us any other path to salvation than the path of labor and sorrow. Why, then, should we be troubled, wasting our health in sufferings for the holy icon of the Savior and of His Most Pure Mother? By resisting the impious command of the emperor, we shall receive the grace of God and timely help."

With such and similar words the Venerable Joseph consoled and strengthened his fellow-prisoners who were confined with him in the dungeon for venerating the icons. It also fell to a certain Orthodox bishop, likewise taken for suffering on account of his veneration of the holy icons, to share their confinement. Feeling himself unable to endure the privations of the prison, he was troubled in human fashion, and out of desire to be freed from his bonds and sufferings he had already begun to incline toward the iconoclast heresy, and, like a ship in a great storm, he was not far from sinking. With what exhortations did the Venerable Joseph not address him, once he perceived his confusion! What tears did he not shed, entreating him with supplication to die without hesitation for the icon of Christ, as for Christ Himself! Nor were his God-inspired words in vain: the bishop was filled with such firmness that even in the most cruel torments he did not renounce his piety, and with the magnanimous greatness of soul he endured everything to the end. Led out to torture, at the sight of the tormentors and the instruments of torment he showed no fear whatever, but himself took off his garments and gave himself up to torture, desiring a thousand times to die, had it been possible, for Christ God, who is depicted in the flesh by iconography. Hung naked at the place of torment, pierced all over with arrows, and at last struck on the head by large stones, the bishop yielded up his spirit to the Lord. Learning of the bishop's martyric end, the Blessed Joseph rejoiced greatly at his un-

shaken courage and gave thanks to Christ, who had strengthened His chosen warrior for such an ascetic feat; though at first he had shown some weakness, afterward he fully recovered himself and vanquished the enemy. In like manner St. Joseph also delivered others from spiritual destruction and turned them toward Christ, constantly teaching all the way of salvation; and God preserved him himself from death, keeping his life for the benefit of very many.

The Venerable Joseph spent six years in the dungeon; and then the impious emperor Leo the Armenian met a cruel end: on the night before the feast of the Nativity of Christ he was slain by his soldiers in the church, during Matins. In that very hour the Venerable Joseph, in the Cretan dungeon, was informed of the destruction of the tormentor and was miraculously freed from his bonds by St. Nicholas, who appeared to him. All that night St. Joseph spent without sleep, unceasingly singing the festal hymns and praying; before dawn a bright radiance illumined the dungeon, and there stood before him a holy and venerable man clothed in hierarchical vestments, with gray hair and a bright face, who said to him:

"I have come to you from Myra of Lycia, sent by God, to bring you at once the joyful tidings: the enemy who troubled the Church and scattered the sheep of Christ has lost both his kingdom and his life, summoned to the judgment of God. Now you must return to Constantinople and confirm many by the grace of the Holy Spirit that dwells in you."

Then the hierarch gave him a scroll and said:

"Take this scroll and eat it."

In the scroll was written: “Hasten, O Generous One, and make haste, for Thou art merciful to help us, for Thou canst do whatever Thou wilt.” Joseph took the scroll, read it, and, having eaten it, joyfully said: “How sweet are Thy words to my palate! sweeter than honey to my mouth” (Ps. 118:103).

Then he who had appeared bade him sing the same words. St. Joseph sang them joyfully, and at once his chains and fetters loosened and fell from his neck, hands, and feet, and he heard the words of the hierarch who had appeared to him:

"Arise and follow me."

He arose; the doors of the dungeon opened of themselves, and he went out without the knowledge of the prison guard. And he saw himself borne through the air by some invisible power. In a short time he found himself near Constantinople, on the highway leading to the city, and he glorified God for so marvelous a miracle.

On entering the city, Joseph did not find alive his beloved father Gregory the Decapolite—he had gone to the Lord—but saw only his disciple, the Blessed John, and with him at Gregory's grave he sorrowed much that he had not been granted to find the holy father alive. Some time later John also went to the Lord and was buried near St. Gregory. Afterward the Venerable Joseph moved to another place, a solitary and quiet spot outside the city, not far from the church of St. John Chrysostom. Settling here, he built a church in the name of Christ's hierarch Nicholas, translated into it the relics of both fathers, Gregory and John, established a monastery, and gathered a brotherhood. Here many spiritual and secular people constantly flocked to the Venerable Joseph to hear his God-inspired teaching, for the grace of the Holy Spirit flowed from his lips like a river in sweet discourses. Once, being in Thessaly, the Venerable Joseph received from a certain virtuous man known to him a considerable part of the relics of the holy Apostle Bartholomew; he brought it to his monastery, and, having built a special church in the name of the holy Apostle Bartholomew, he placed in it with honor a portion of his holy relics. Cherishing great love and faith toward the holy Apostle, he often was granted to see him in dreams. He desired to adorn the feast of the holy Apostle with hymns of praise, but did not dare, doubting whether this work would be pleasing to the holy Apostle, and he fervently besought God and the Apostle of God to reveal this to him and to grant him wisdom from on high for composing verses of praise worthy of St. Bartholomew. With fasting and tears the Venerable Joseph prayed for forty days, and when the day of the Apostle's memory drew near, on the eve of the festival he saw that St. Bartholomew had appeared in the sanctuary, clothed in white vestments, had opened the sanctuary curtain, and was calling him to come. When the Venerable Joseph approached nearer, the holy

Apostle took the Holy Gospel from the Holy Table, laid it on Joseph's breast, and said:

"May the right hand of almighty God bless you, and may the waters of heavenly wisdom be poured out upon your tongue: let your heart be a temple of the Holy Spirit, and let your hymns delight the universe."

So said the holy Apostle Bartholomew, and he became invisible; and the Venerable Joseph, feeling within himself the grace of wisdom, was filled with ineffable joy and thanksgiving. From that time he began to write church hymns and canons, with which he adorned the feast not only of the holy Apostle Bartholomew but also of many saints; above all he honored with many canons the Most Pure Mother of God and St. Nicholas the hierarch. He richly adorned the holy Church with hymns and received the name of Hymnographer.

Under the reign of Theophilus[5] a storm of iconoclasm again arose against the Church, and again many were subjected to persecution and torment. Then our Venerable Father Joseph the Hymnographer, for his fearless and open denunciation of the heresy, was exiled to Cherson, where he remained in bonds and sufferings until the death of Theophilus. Empress Theodora with her son Michael, who took over the government after Theophilus's death and, together with the most holy Patriarch Methodius, restored Orthodoxy[6], recalled Joseph to Constantinople. St. Ignatius, who assumed the throne after the repose of St. Methodius, made the Venerable Joseph keeper of the sacred vessels of the great Church of God in Constantinople. For his virtuous life, and for the wise and soul-saving words that issued from his lips, turning many to the way of salvation, the Venerable Joseph was greatly beloved by the most holy patriarch and by all, both clergy and laity. Some years passed, and the Venerable Joseph, for denouncing lawlessness, again suffered exile at the hands of Bardas, the brother of the empress, the first ruler after the emperor. Not fearing God nor ashamed before men, Bardas grievously violated the laws of the Church, putting away from himself his lawful wife without any fault on her part and taking to

5. From 829 to 842 A.D.

6. Veneration of icons was restored in 840 A.D. St. Methodius, 846 A.D.; his memory is celebrated on June 14.

himself a wife who was his own kinswoman. The Venerable Joseph openly denounced him, as once St. John the Forerunner denounced Herod, and for this Bardas persecuted him and did him harm. The same lot befell the most holy Patriarch Ignatius, who suffered exile and many afflictions from the lawless Bardas. But when Bardas was slain by the servants of the emperor (and perished with an uproar), and after him Emperor Michael also lost his life at the hands of his own attendants, and Basil the Macedonian[7] took the kingdom, then St. Ignatius and the Venerable Joseph were recalled to Constantinople; Ignatius again assumed his throne, and Joseph his former office of keeper of the sacred vessels. Not only the most holy Ignatius, but also his successor, Patriarch Photius[8], loved and honored St. Joseph the Hymnographer. Photius entrusted to the Venerable the entire administration of the Church, called him a man of God, an Angel in the flesh, and the father of fathers, and commanded all his clergy to have the Venerable Joseph as their spiritual father, to open their conscience to him and to confess their sins. Possessing foresight, the Venerable discerned hidden sins, but did not denounce the sinner; instead he admonished him with exhortatory words until the one confessing, being moved, disclosed the hidden lawlessness: for Joseph was mighty in God-inspired discourse and could easily turn sinners to repentance.

Having lived many years and attained a deep old age, Joseph fell into bodily infirmity from the many labors in which he had struggled from his youth: from fasting, from persecutions for the sake of truth, from bonds and prison, from cares for the ordering of the Church, for the adorning with hymns of the feasts and memorials of the saints, and from great concern for the salvation of human souls. Before his departure from the world, at the end of the holy Forty Days, he fell ill, and in a dream he received from God the intimation of his imminent repose. On the holy Great Friday of the voluntary Passion of Christ he wrote out all the church affairs and matters entrusted to him and sent them to

7. Basil the Macedonian reigned from 867 to 886.
8. Photius occupied the throne the first time from 857 to 867; the second time, from 877 to 886 A.D.

the Most Holy Patriarch Photius. Then, preparing for his departure, he began to pray to God, saying:

"I thank Thee, O Lord my God, that beneath the shelter of Thy wings Thou hast kept me all the days of my life! And now keep my spirit to the end, and grant me to escape without harm the prince of darkness and the terrors of the air, lest the transgressions of my life, committed by me in ignorance, serve for the joy of my enemy. O Word of the Father, preserve Thy flock and protect to the end of the age all that was created by Thy right hand. Be a helper to the beloved sons of Thy Church; grant to the holy Church, Thy bride, eternal peace and undisturbed tranquility; enlighten the royal priesthood[9] with Thy gifts; subdue the proud Belial[10] beneath the feet of the defenders of the Orthodox faith, and turn away from the Church all heresies harmful to the soul. And grant to my soul a peaceful and gentle separation from the body. Although I am unworthy to be numbered among Thy holy saints, in whom the Holy Spirit dwelt—for I acknowledge myself a sinner before Thee—yet Thou, infinitely good, look not upon my sins, but make me worthy of the lot of Thy sons."

Having offered this prayer and partaken of the Divine Mysteries, the Venerable Joseph blessed all who were present, raised his hands to heaven, and with a bright and joyful countenance yielded up his holy soul to God.

Immediately there gathered from everywhere a multitude of monks and laymen; many of them wept, calling the departed one: some "father," others "nurturer," some "benefactor," some "consoler," others "teacher, instructor and guide to salvation." With glorification they accompanied him to the grave and buried him with honor; yet even more honorably and gloriously was his holy soul escorted by immortal spirits into the heavenly abodes. This was seen with his own eyes by one friend beloved of him, a righteous and God-pleasing man, who was at a considerable distance from the place of the Venerable's death. At the hour when Joseph's soul, beloved of God, was parting from the body and rising to heaven, this man heard a voice from above saying to him:

9. Thus Christians are called in 1 Pet. 2:9.
10. From Hebrew: "unprofitable," a name of the devil (2 Cor. 6:15).

"He has gone out"—and looking upward, he saw the vault of heaven opened and the choirs of saints coming forth from it: first the choir of the Apostles, then that of the martyrs, the prophets and the hierarchs. That man marveled and was struck with awe at the wondrous vision and was at a loss as to its meaning. And again he heard a voice: "Look and attend, and you will learn the meaning of all that you see." And at once he saw four youths brighter than all, and in their midst a Maiden of ineffable purity and glory: it was the All-Pure and All-Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ our God. Advancing, She commanded the hosts of holy men to receive that holy soul, which had glorified in hymns their deeds and memory and had imitated their lives. And all with ineffable joy met and received with zeal and love a certain worthy Person being raised to heaven. The beholder of this, the said man, asked himself in thought:

"Whom do the hosts of the heavenly ones deem worthy of such great honor?"

And he heard the loud voices of the Angels escorting the holy soul upward: "This is Joseph the hymnographer, the adornment of the whole Church, who was granted the grace of the Holy Spirit, who imitated the life of the Apostles and martyrs and described their deeds, for which he now receives honor and praise from those same saints." Thus the soul of the Venerable Joseph the hymnographer was led with triumph into the heavenly abodes. This most glorious vision filled the man-witness with great joy, and also with great sorrow that he was not granted to see afterward the glory with which the blessed soul entered within the heavenly mansions, stood before, and bowed down to the most radiant Light of the Triune God.

There is also another report of the escorting of the Venerable Joseph to heaven. In Constantinople there was a church of the holy martyr Theodore Phanerotes, which means "the revealer" (the discoverer), for to those who came to him with prayer he revealed things stolen, hidden or lost. A slave, very useful to a certain man, ran away from him, and that man in sorrow came to the church of St. Theodore Phanerotes, had a moleben served, and implored the Martyr of Christ to show him his slave. For three days and three nights he remained in

the church, and, receiving no revelation, in grief he wished to depart. At Matins, while an edifying discourse was being read in the church, he dozed a little during the reading and saw St. Theodore appear to him, who said:

"Why do you grieve, man? Joseph, the composer of the sacred hymns, has just departed from the body, and we were present with him. He reposed this night, and we all, honored by him in canons and hymns, escorted his soul to heaven and set it before the Face of God. This is why I was delayed in appearing to you. But now I am here and fulfill your petition: go to such-and-such a place"—and he named the place—"there you will find the slave you are seeking."

Both of these reports convince us what great glory the Venerable Joseph received from God for his labors, and what honor and praise from the saints of God. Standing now in the heavenly dwellings before the throne of God, he sings the Angelic hymns, glorifying and praising the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Triune God, forever. Amen.

Kontakion, Tone 4:

Inexhaustible wellspring of repentance, bestower of unending consolation, and abyss of compunction art thou, O Joseph. Grant us the divine tears of repentance, by which we who weep here shall find consolation from God, as we ask for thy help, O holy one.

* * *

Suffering of the Holy Martyr Pherwufa

Страдание святой мученицы Фервуфы

After the martyr's death of the Persian bishop St. Symeon, which he suffered at the hand of King Sapor[11], there remained alive two of his sisters: one a maiden named Pherwufa, and the other a widow; and in addition, one slave woman.

The holy virgin Pherwufa was still very young and was distinguished by extraordinary beauty. Having heard of her beauty, the

Persian queen, wife of Sapor, ordered her brought to her. And so, a year after the slaying of the holy bishop Symeon, the royal servants brought the holy virgin Pherwufa, together with her sister and the slave woman, to the queen. Seeing with her own eyes the wondrous beauty of Pherwufa, the queen addressed her with these words:

"With your beauty, maiden, you ought to be mistress over many people."

The holy Pherwufa answered her:

"I have a Bridegroom, Christ, for whom my brother suffered; of any other bridegroom I cannot even think!"

Asking Pherwufa nothing further, the queen ordered her, together with her sister and slave, to remain for the time being in her royal palace.

The next morning the queen suddenly fell ill. To heal her, Persian magi[12] came to the palace. One of these magi, seeing in the queen's chambers the most beautiful Pherwufa, was struck by her beauty; soon after, leaving the queen, that magus sent word to the holy virgin as follows:

"If you wish to be my wife, I will ask the queen to release you to freedom, and you will possess great riches."

The holy Pherwufa answered him:

"Being a Christian, I cannot be united in marriage with a pagan."

The magus, captivated by Pherwufa's beauty, was greatly shamed by such an answer and was brought to anger. Coming before King Sapor, he said to him:

"The queen's illness is not accidental: some poison has been given to her. In the queen's chambers dwell two Christian sisters, whose broth-

11. Sapor II was King of Persia from 309 to 379 A.D. Christianity existed in Persia even in an earlier period. Shortly after his conversion, the Emperor Constantine the Great wrote to Sapor on behalf of the Christians. But the success of the new religion was followed with envy and anxiety by the magi, and when war broke out between Sapor and Constantius, they informed the king that the converts were loyal to Roman interests. As a result, Sapor began a persecution, subjecting the Christians to especially burdensome taxes. Then their head, Symeon, Bishop of Seleucia and Ctesiphon, was seized and brought before the king, who demanded that he acknowledge the national religion. When he refused, the king sentenced him first to imprisonment and then to death. The persecution grew still more severe in the last years of Sapor's reign.

er, the Christian bishop Symeon, was slain by your command. Surely the sisters of the murdered bishop, out of malice toward you, have administered poison to your queen."

The king at once ordered the sisters brought in for interrogation.

When all three women—the holy Pherwufa, her sister and the slave—had been brought into the royal chamber, by the king's command the chief of the magi, Mauptis, came out to interrogate them together with two other dignitaries. When these three judges had come in and seated themselves in their places, the aforementioned three women were set before them for questioning. As soon as the said judges noticed the extraordinary beauty of the holy Pherwufa, all of them were inflamed with lust for her, while at the same time hiding their evil designs from one another. Then the judges asked the women brought before them:

"Why did you poison the queen, sovereign of the world? For this deed you deserve death!"

"Why," replied Saint Pherwufa on behalf of all the women, "has Satan put into your heart such an unjust thought, and for what purpose do you wish to bring unjust dishonor upon us? If you thirst for our blood, there is no one to forbid you to drink it. If you desire to put us to death, nothing prevents you, for you daily defile your hands with such deeds. As Christians, we die for Christ our God, not denying Him, for He is our life; as we are commanded to worship and serve the One God, so we shall act. It is also written in our books that a sorcerer and an enchanter shall not live, but shall die by the hand of their own kinsmen (Ex. 22:18; Lev. 20:6). How then could we prepare poison for anyone, knowing that such an act is no less a crime than if one were to renounce our God, since for both of these sins the same death penalty awaits?"

While Saint Pherwufa was speaking, the judges listened to her with pleasure, marveling at her beauty and wisdom, and they felt themselves unable to answer her words. Each of them reflected within himself: "I

12. In antiquity, the term "magi" denoted wise men who possessed knowledge of the hidden forces of nature, the movements of the heavenly luminaries, and sacred writings, and who interpreted dreams and foretold the future.

will beg the king to free these women from death, and I will take this maiden for my wife." And only Mauptis at last managed to say:

"Even if the law forbids you to practice sorcery, you could nonetheless have done it out of vengeance for the death of your brother."

Saint Pherwufa replied to this:

"It is true that our brother suffered at your hands; but if, in requital for his death, we had wished death upon you, we would have destroyed our own life before our God. If you, burning with rage, did kill our brother, he nonetheless lives and rejoices with Christ in His Heavenly Kingdom; in comparison with that Kingdom, yours is nothing!"

When the saint had uttered these words, the princes ordered all the women to be led away to prison.

Early the next morning, the chief of the magi, Mauptis, secretly sent his servant to the prison to Saint Pherwufa, instructing him to say the following:

"Behold, I am ready to beg the king that you and those with you may remain alive, only consent to be my wife."

The holy virgin boldly answered him:

"Enemy of God and of all righteousness! Shut your mouth and do not dare to speak such impious words to me again! I can no longer listen to them! That which you desire shall never come to pass! Once and for all I have been joined to my Lord Jesus Christ, for whose sake I keep my virginity and for whose sake I strive to preserve my faith in purity. He alone, free from sin, is able to deliver me from your impious hands and can save me from the snares you prepare for me. I do not fear death, and I am not afraid of blood. The path along which you wish to lead me will bring me to my beloved brother, the holy bishop Symeon. There I shall find consolation in my sorrows and griefs, which I have felt especially keenly since his death."

Thus the holy bride of Christ, Fervufa, boldly drove away the man whom Mavptis had sent to her, and she caused Mavptis himself to be put to shame. In the same way Saint Fervufa dealt with the two other judges, who had also been captivated by her beauty. Each of them likewise secretly sent his envoys to her in prison, tempting Saint Fervufa

to marry him; but all were unsuccessful and were put to shame by the saint.

After the three judges perceived in one another a passion for the holy maiden, and seeing the complete failure of their attempts to gain her, they resolved at all costs to destroy this holy maiden together with the women who were with her. To this end they went to the king and reported to him that these three women were Christian sorceresses and enchantresses, and therefore deserved death. The king said that if they wished to remain alive, they must worship the sun.

Once again brought before the same three judges mentioned above, the holy martyrs, having heard the royal command to worship the sun, answered:

"We worship God, the Creator of heaven and earth; the sun, the creation of our God, we cannot honor with the honors that we give to God. No threats of yours will compel us to renounce our love for our Lord and God Jesus Christ."

While the holy women were speaking these words, Mavptis and the two other judges who were with him cried out with a loud voice:

"Let these three women who gave poison to the queen and caused her a grievous illness perish from the face of the earth!"

Immediately afterward, a sentence of death was issued from the king against the holy martyrs, by which the three Christian women were to die in whatever manner the Persian magi might devise for them. These impious magi said:

"If these women are not cut in half, and if the queen does not pass through the halves of their bodies, she cannot recover."

When the holy martyrs were then led away to be cut in two, Mauptis again sent his servant to the holy virgin Pherwufa, who said to her in his name:

"If you will be pleased to obey me, you will not die; neither will those women who are with you."

"Why do you say to me, impious man," the holy virgin rebuked Mauptis with an angry and loud voice, "what I cannot listen to? I have resolved to die for Christ, my God, in order to receive from Him eternal life. Shall I love temporal life so as to die to eternal life?"

After this, the impious torturers led the holy martyrs outside the city, and there they prepared for each of them two posts driven into the ground.

Then they bound the holy virgin Pherwufa to one of the posts by the neck, and to another by the feet. In the same way they bound the other holy martyrs to the remaining posts. Afterward they sawed the holy martyrs in half with a large carpenter's saw. Thus the holy martyrs, brides of Christ, committed their pure souls into the hands of their immortal Bridegroom.

The torturers, setting up six large posts, three on each side of the road, hung upon them the sawn parts of the bodies of the holy martyrs. These were like the most beautiful fruit hanging on the trees, covered with blood. A spectacle full of horror and worthy of tears was presented. Then along that same road, between the hanging bodies of the holy martyrs, the impious Persian queen was carried, followed by a great multitude of people. After all this, the honorable bodies of the holy martyrs were thrown into a ditch.

Thus the holy martyr Pherwufa, together with her sister and maidservant, on the fourth day of the month of April[13] ended her sufferings for our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory, honor, and worship unto ages of ages. Amen.

* * *

Memory of the Venerable Zosimas

Память преподобного Зосимы

Our Venerable Father Zosimas felt from childhood a desire to serve God. While still of tender age, he went into a monastery and received monastic tonsure in Tyre[14], in the land of Palestine. Having lived nobly in the monastic life, he became an experienced monk and was granted many revelations from God. Spending his time in prayer, he constantly engaged in manual labor with tears. And it once came

13. The holy women martyrs died around 341–343 A.D.

14. Tyre is a city situated near the northeastern shores of the Dead Sea, on the southwestern slope of the Gilead mountain range, in Transjordanian Palestine, known in antiquity under the name of Perea or the land beyond the Jordan.

into his mind to wonder whether there was among the desert-dwellers a man who surpassed him in his ascetic labors. Then there appeared to him someone unknown, who said:

"Zosimas, you have attained, as a man, a high degree of ascetic struggle, but no one among men can be perfect; and that you may learn how many different ways of salvation exist, leave the place where you now labor and go to the monastery that is near the Jordan."

Zosimas did as he was commanded and went to the indicated monastery[15]. In this monastery there was a custom by which, during Great Lent, all the monks went out of the monastery into the desert for prayer, leaving in the monastery only one doorkeeper, and then on Maundy Thursday they gathered again in the monastery for holy Communion. When the time came, Zosimas went into the desert together with the other monks. Here he saw Saint Mary and pursued her, but she said to him:

"Zosimas! If you desire to see me, give me your garment."

Zosimas fulfilled Mary's request, and she, having put on the garment, related to him in order all that she had done from her youth — how at first she had passed her life in fornication, and how afterward she had come into the desert. After this she asked Zosimas to come to the Jordan with the Holy Gifts the following year. When the year had passed, Zosimas came with the Body and Blood of Christ. Then he saw how the venerable woman came to him across the Jordan as if over dry land, and he communed her. In the third year he went again into the desert and found the Venerable Mary already dead[16]. Because of his old age he had no strength to bury her, and seeing a lion, he said to it:

"Beast! Bury the Venerable Mary, for I am old and cannot dig."

Immediately the lion dug a pit, and Zosimas buried the honorable body of the Venerable Mary. Returning to the monastery, he told Abbot John and the whole brotherhood about the Venerable Mary and how the Lord had glorified her. After this our honorable father Zosimas

15. This was the Jordan Monastery of St. John the Forerunner, which was ruined before 1651 and had fallen into dilapidation already in 723.
16. The Venerable Mother died on Great Friday, April 1, 521 A.D.

labored still in prayer, tears, and various ascetic deeds, and he reposed in deep old age[17]. The monks of the monastery buried him with honor.

On the same day, the memory of the Venerable George the Silent.

* * *

ALSO COMMEMORATED THIS DAY

On the same day, the memory of the Venerable George the Silent.

17. The Venerable Zosimas died in 523 A.D., at almost 100 years of age.

THE FIFTH DAY OF APRIL

April 5

5 апреля

New Calendar April 5 · Old Calendar April 18 (civil dates)

Suffering of the Holy Martyrs Agathopus and Theodulus

Страдание святых мучеников Агафопода и Феодула

In the reign of the impious Roman emperors Diocletian and Maximian[2394], there lived in Thessalonica[1] two God-pleasing servants of the Church of God, Agathopus and Theodulus. Agathopus was a deacon in rank, advanced in years, and lived a chaste life. Theodulus was a reader. The son of pious Christian parents, he was young and beautiful of face, and he lived a blameless life. Theodulus had three brothers according to the flesh: Capiton, Mitrodorus and Philostorgius, who lived as pious a life as he himself did.

The blessed Theodulus, even before his ascetic struggle of suffering, had received from God a pledge of the martyr's crown that was to be bestowed upon him. Once, resting at night, Theodulus saw in a dream that he was about to receive into his hand a certain object from a certain venerable man. Awaking from sleep, Theodulus indeed found in his hand a very beautiful ring, made of a material no one could identify, with a seal bearing the image of the holy Cross. This was a sign of the sufferings of St. Theodulus for Christ our God, who suffered for us on the Cross. The holy youth Theodulus afterwards healed all manner of diseases among men with this ring. Whichever of the sick he met while carrying this ring, the sickness immediately left the suffering man and he became well, so that many of the pagans, seeing this, turned to Christ.

1. Thessalonica or Solun, the homeland of the enlighteners of the Slavs, Sts. Cyril and Methodius, is a city in Macedonia, on the Aegean Sea.

When the aforementioned pagan emperors raised persecution against the Christians, they sent their decrees everywhere, compelling all people to worship the works of human hands, the idols, and not to worship the One God, the Creator of all[2]. An imperial decree of this kind also came to Thessalonica, where instruments of torture prepared for those who disobeyed the imperial command were displayed for all to see[3]. Many of the faithful fled from here, seeking to hide wherever they could; others bravely gave themselves up to torment; and still others, being faint-hearted and weak, fearing torment and death, went over to the side of the pagans and partook with them of idol sacrifices, thus preferring this vain present life to the immortal life. But by escaping brief torments, they were preparing for themselves eternal death and perdition. The devil rejoiced over such people, yet he was always defeated and put to shame by the magnanimous and courageous soldiers of Christ, such as these two holy men, Agathopus and Theodulus. These, during the fierce persecution that had come upon them, did not flee or hide, but ceaselessly remained in the house of God, praying to God day and night for His holy Church, which had been subjected to such calamities, and day and night awaiting the beginning of their sufferings. Indeed, when the pagan soldiers learned of the saints, they at once seized them and threw them into prison. At that time the governor of Thessalonica was Faustinus. Seating himself in his judgment seat, he commanded that the confessors of Christ, Agathopus and Theodulus, be brought before him for interrogation. As though summoned to a feast, they went with joy, holding one another by the hand and courageously exclaiming:

"We are Christians!"

When the saints stood before the tribunal of the tormentor, he, wishing first of all to ensnare the younger by his seductions, ordered everyone to withdraw and Agathopus to be taken to another place. Then, calling Theodulus nearer to himself, he said to him kindly:

2. In 304 Diocletian issued the fourth edict, by which all Christians were condemned to torture and suffering, with the aim of forcing them to renounce Christianity and offer sacrifices to idols.
3. Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, a contemporary of this persecution, in his Ecclesiastical History recounts in detail all the horrors that accompanied the persecution of Christians in various regions and cities of the empire.

"Submit, young man, I beg you, renounce your new Christian false teaching and proceed to observe the laws and customs established from antiquity, if you do not wish to end your life in torments."

But St. Theodulus answered him:

"I left error and deceit long ago, and I fear for you, so devoted to vanity, lest you undergo eternal death."

The judge was not offended by the saint's words, but again tried in every way to tempt him to proceed to offer sacrifice to the idols, promising him gifts and honors. A priest of Zeus[4] named Xenos, who was standing nearby, said to the saint:

"If honors and gifts do not persuade you to offer sacrifice, let torments persuade you to obey the imperial commands!"

"The terrors of torments can in no way frighten me," the martyr answered the priest, "and they will never incline me to fulfil your will."

In reply to the words of Faustinus, who spoke next, that an honorable life is better than a painful death, St. Theodulus answered:

"Indeed, I acknowledge that life is better than death, and therefore I have resolved in my mind to despise this earthly and short-lived life, that I may become a partaker of the immortal life and of the eternal heavenly blessings. So then, torment me with wounds and fire, and you will see that my tormented body is subject to corruption and destruction, but my rational soul, being incorruptible, will at once be freed from the bonds of the body after the torments and will rejoice in endless life."

"I beg you," continued the judge, "tell me, who will give you those great blessings, for love of Whom you have now resolved to despise torments and death itself?"

"God," answered St. Theodulus, "who determined all things by the laws of nature, and His Son, Christ, the Word of the Father (cf. Jn. 1 ff.), by whose Cross I have been marked from my earliest childhood; I shall not abandon this sign until the end of my life, and I would sooner consent to lose my body through torments than renounce this sign of

4. By the name "Zeus" (son of Cronus and Rhea) the ancient Greeks designated the god of the sky. He had many epithets, which either arose from the names of various localities where honor was paid to him, or served to express one or another of the many attributes of this deity.

Christ. I am the faithful servant of my Master, and you will not conquer me either by fire or by iron!"

The governor Faustinus, astonished at such courage and boldness of the young Theodulus, ordered him to be taken away from himself to a separate place. Then, calling St. Agathopus to himself, he said to him:

"Worship our gods! Here is Theodulus, who was also in error; now he has given his promise to worship them and to offer sacrifice together with us."

Perceiving the governor's cunning and deceit, St. Agathopus said to him:

"I too will gladly offer sacrifice to the true God and to His Son Jesus Christ, for Theodulus also promised to offer an acceptable sacrifice to Him and to no other god."

But Faustinus objected to him:

"No, Theodulus promised to offer his sacrifice not to this God, but to the twelve[5] gods who sustain the whole universe."

St. Agathopus answered him with a smile:

"Why do you call gods that which has been made by a craftsman out of corruptible material? Can those be gods which are made by human hands, and which men worship as though their own handiwork were superior and most perfect beings? Are those gods who cannot resist those who wish to overthrow and break them, and cannot defend themselves in any way, who do not see with their eyes, do not walk on their feet, and have in themselves no sensation whatsoever? Are those gods of whom the pagans say that they have a living soul and indulge in all kinds of most abominable fornications; and now the craftsmen who made their statues sell them for one silver coin or for four small copper coins? After all this, can I offer the honor due to the almighty God to your unworthy and abominable gods? Can I sing praises and hymns before your deaf idols?"

When the saint spoke such words, the pagan officials standing around him feared that the words of Agathopus might confirm in faith

all the other Christians brought for interrogation. Therefore they ordered Agathopus, together with Theodulus, to be led at once to prison.

While the saints were being led to prison, a huge crowd of people followed them. Some in the crowd, pitying the youth of St. Theodulus, tried with many flattering speeches to shake his faith in Christ. Others, gazing at the venerable gray hairs of Agathopus, said, addressing him:

"Agathopus! Surely you have a childish mind, and do not understand what is useful for your life!"

But the saints went on, answering nothing to all the words addressed to them.

When they reached the prison, they humbly prayed to God there and joined the number of prisoners held here for various crimes.

At midnight the saints were strengthened by divine visions and were alert in spirit, rejoicing as they glorified Jesus Christ. After this, having thoroughly washed their faces and hands with water, and bowing their knees and heads to the ground, they offered the following united prayer to God, crying out as with one voice:

O God! Creator and Providence of all, who didst make this visible world, and didst ordain the unceasing course of the heavenly luminaries, that the sun set between them might give light throughout the day and foster the growth of the fruits of the earth, and the moon by its radiance might disperse the darkness of night. O God! Thou who didst grant the earth the power to bring forth living creatures, the depths of the sea fishes, and didst assign the birds their place in the air; O God! Thou who didst command the sea to serve man, whom Thou hast created, with its gifts; Thou who didst command the birds to fill the air with their song, Thou who didst command the earth to bring forth in abundance various fruits for the needs of man, that through the lips of men it might offer Thee thanksgiving and praise, Thee, Lord of all the world. O God! Thou didst not will that our race, lawless and turned

5. The twelve highest or chief gods, according to the Greek conception, dwelt in the airy space between earth and heaven, and their residence was in splendid halls on the summit of Mount Olympus. Hence these gods are also called the Olympian gods. These gods were: Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Demeter, Apollo, Artemis, Hephaestus, Pallas-Athena, Ares, Aphrodite, Hermes and Hestia.

aside from Thy commandments and given over to every sin, should perish utterly; Thou didst not permit the devil wholly to blind the rational creature and lead it away into everlasting perdition; but, forgetting the sins of men, Thou, solely in Thy mercy, didst send down from heaven to men Thine Only-begotten Son, that He, taking upon Himself human nature, might unite His immortality with our mortal nature, and that Thy Word, always abiding with Thee, through whom all things came to be, might again turn back to the path of truth those who had gone astray in unrighteousness. Thou, with Thy Son and Thy Holy Spirit, caring for the universe by Thy glorious wonders, didst bring men, formerly impious, to Thy holy faith. Thou, the Son of God with the Father and the Holy Spirit, didst, conquering the laws of nature and death, raise by Thy word Lazarus, who had been four days dead (Jn. 11:1–44). Thou didst, by clay laid upon the eyes, enlighten the man blind from birth (Jn. 9:1–38), as Thou didst grant swift healing to the woman with an issue of blood who touched Thy garment (Mt. 9:20–22), and didst make whole the paralytic, bidding him take up his bed (Mt. 9:2–8). Therefore now also, O God, show mercy to us, strengthen us with Thy power from on high, that we, bearing with courage, with Thy help, all the torments to which the impious shall subject us, may be able to attain the Kingdom of Heaven.

While the saints were praying in such words, their fellow-prisoners, who were confined there with them for murder or adultery, overcoming in themselves the fear of bodily death, hastily fell at the feet of the saints, beseeching them for forgiveness of their sins and for the salvation of their souls from eternal death. The people, who at that time were outside the prison, broke open the prison doors, entered within, and with emotion listened to the words which the servants of God were speaking. This was noticed by the zealous servant of the devil, Eupsychius, the chief judge of Thessalonica, who hastily ran to the military commander and told him that if the two Christians confined in the prison were not put to death at once, many of the people would abandon the service of the idols. The commander was inflamed with anger and immediately sent soldiers to bring the youth and the old man before

him. And the servants of Christ were at once brought before the unrighteous judge. Looking at St. Theodulus, the commander asked him:

"Do you not know that you ought to carry out the orders of the emperors who possess the world?"

"What the Lord of heaven and earth commands," answered him St. Theodulus, "is indeed just and worthy of attentive hearing and immediate execution. As for what your temporal rulers command, only those of their commands should be carried out which prove to be just and not opposed to the Creator of heaven; unjust commands, however, should in no case be obeyed."

After this the military commander Faustinus asked the saint:

"Tell me, who created heaven?"

St. Theodulus answered:

"It was created by God Almighty and the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who is the Word of the Father."

"Is it not He," asked Faustinus, "whom the Jews crucified, delivering Him to the most cruel torments?"

"Yes, it is He whom the Jews crucified," answered the martyr. "He of His own will was pleased to suffer for us, then by the power of His Godhead rose from the dead, and was seen ascending into heaven as the conqueror of death, whence He will again come to convict and judge the unbelievers."

"Why then," asked Faustinus again, "do you not wish to offer sacrifice to our gods?"

"Is it not better," answered the saint, "to offer sacrifice to Him by whom the makers of idols were created, than to offer it to these idols? Truly the Creator is better than the creature!"

Then the military commander Faustinus ordered that the garments be stripped from the holy youth Theodulus and that he be exposed for torments. At the same time a herald cried out loudly:

"Offer sacrifice to the gods, and you will be set free!"

But the martyr said to the tormentor:

"You take from my body its garments, but you will never be able to take away the faith which I have in my God."

While the saint spoke so boldly, despised the torments and repeatedly reproached the tormentors, the military commander ordered that, before Theodulus' eyes, sacrifice be offered to the idols by those who had at first been Christians but, being overcome by the torments, had bowed down to the idols. Beholding this spectacle, St. Theodulus grieved in his heart for those who had been overcome by the pagans and had fallen away from the truth, and said to the military commander:

"You have overcome the weak, but the strong soldiers of Christ you will in no case be able to overcome, even if you devise still greater torments! Know then, commander, that the torments you have now prepared for us are insignificant and worthy of laughter. Devise more cruel ones, that you may learn what our faith and love for God are."

After this the military commander ordered Theodulus to bring the Christian books to the court. But the saint answered him:

"If I knew that you, having come to know the vanity of idolatry, would reject it and desire to establish yourself in true piety, I would bring you the prophetic and apostolic books. But since I perceive that you are contriving something wicked, for this reason I will not place God's gift into your hands."

"If you do not at once carry out my command," answered Faustinus, "I will not spare you, I will tear your body into pieces and cast it out to be devoured by the beasts."

"Behold, my body is given over to torments," continued the saint, "do with it what you will; torture me in the most cruel manner, but still I will not give up the holy books to be defiled by the impious!"

Then, wishing to frighten the martyr, the military commander ordered that he be led to the place of beheading by the sword, supposing that at the sight of near death the saint would be afraid and submit to his will.

And so, when the saint had been brought to the place appointed for beheading and saw the naked sword raised over him, he called to God with the following words:

"Glory to Thee, O God, Father of my Lord who was pleased to suffer for us! Behold, by His grace I too go to Thee, gladly dying for Thee!"

Having said this, he bowed his head beneath the sword, but he was not beheaded. The military commander, noticing that St. Theodulus, as it were, desired a crown of triumph for himself, having prepared for beheading by the sword, ordered that he be returned unharmed, and meanwhile himself conducted the examination of St. Agathopus. He asked him:

"What is your manner of life?"

"The same," answered the saint, "as that of Theodulus."

"What do you have in common with Theodulus," asked the commander, "does not kinship unite you?"

"We are not kinsmen according to the flesh," answered St. Agathopus, "but we are united by faith and convictions, and insofar as we are separated by kinship, so far are we united in spirit."

Then the military commander said:

"I perceive that you both are hastening to one and the same torment; this your words reveal," said the commander in reply to the saint's words.

St. Agathopus answered this:

"If by the way of one and the same torment we are freed from the present life, we shall also be counted worthy of one and the same reward from our God!"

"Are you not ashamed," said Faustinus, "being already an old man, to be deluded like a youth and to surrender yourself voluntarily to manifest destruction?"

"I am not deluded in the least," answered St. Agathopus, "and I do not suffer loss from my hope in my Christ; on the contrary, if I am old in years, I ought all the more to show zeal in serving my God; and I praise Theodulus, who in his youthful age stands so courageously for the honoring of the One True God of ours."

Looking at that moment upon Theodulus, the military commander Faustinus said, turning to him:

"Youth! Do not be beguiled by the words of this old man, do not recklessly give yourself over to death. He is already an old man: it is not surprising, therefore, that he desires death; but you, being young and still so tender in years, why do you desire in vain to be deprived of this sweet life?"

St. Theodulus answered him:

"Do not suppose that I am weaker than the old man and cannot endure the same torments as he. Though I am youthful in years, nevertheless I acknowledge, in the same way as the old man, the One God, Creator of all that exists, and together with the old man I am ready to suffer for Him."

After the saints had finished their speech, they were, by the command of the tormentor, bound and again led back to the prison. Meanwhile the saints glorified God, with whose help they had conquered the devil.

Their acquaintances, gathering to them, surrounded them with weeping.

"Why have you gathered here," St. Theodulus asked them, "and why do you weep?"

"We weep over your misfortune," they answered.

"Why do you," answered the saint with a smile, "instead of weeping over your own calamities, weep over our calamities, which lead us to something better?"

While the saint was speaking these words, a soldier sent by the commander came into the prison. Binding both saints with iron chains, he confined them in the inner part of the prison and locked them in, so that no one could come to them.

Meanwhile the holy martyrs, as evening deepened, prayed to God that He would strengthen them to the end in their struggle, and they fell asleep. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who watches over His Venerable ones, sent them the same vision in sleep (for they were of one accord and one mind) concerning the death that was about to overtake them. The vision was as follows: it seemed to the saints that both of them entered one and the same ship, crowded with many people, and that the ship found itself in the middle of the sea. The ship was tossed from side

to side, for the sea was stirred by a mighty storm. The ship, battered and broken by the waves, was already sinking into the water; some of the people on board were drowning, others were swimming, and still others were drawn toward the rocks and perished. Meanwhile the saints saw themselves, by the steering of the helmsman, being delivered from drowning, clothed in bright garments, and brought to rest upon a high mountain, up which they ascended to heaven. Awakening from sleep, the saints related the vision to one another and marvelled that both of them had seen the same thing. From this they understood that a single grace would be granted to them both from Christ: namely, that they would safely cross the sea of martyrdom, in which many had perished, and would ascend to heaven to receive the eternal recompense. After this vision their hope and trust grew stronger still, and in fervent gratitude to their good Helmsman, God, they fell prostrate and cried out: "Who has ever expected such a benefaction as Thou, O God, hast bestowed upon us for the sake of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who became man! Who is so unwise that, beholding Thy great benefactions to the human race, he would prefer virtue to a vain life? Who is as swift to good deeds as Thy Son, who revealed to us in a vision the grace about to be poured out upon us, showed us also the crowns with which we shall be crowned, and through this strengthened us for the struggle before us!"

When they had thus prayed and offered thanksgiving to God until morning, at daybreak the keeper of the prison came to them and informed them that the commander was summoning Theodulus and Agathopus. Signing themselves with the sign of the Cross, they went out of the prison in their chains and followed the soldiers. A multitude of their acquaintances gathered there and wept over them, knowing that death awaited them. But the holy Theodulus, with a radiant face, turned to the weeping ones and said:

"If you weep out of love for us, you ought rather to rejoice for us, that we are enduring this struggle for the honoring of the True God. If you weep out of diabolical envy, then weep for yourselves more than for us, for you have turned aside from the righteous path and are hastening toward perdition."

After this the saints were brought before the tribunal for the third time and were again interrogated by the commander Faustinus, but they no longer answered anything except these words:

"We are Christians, and for the name of Christ we are ready to endure every kind of suffering."

Then the commander, with a face saddened with grief, pronounced their sentence of death, which read:

"Theodulus and Agathopus, who would not offer sacrifice to the gods, shall be drowned in the sea."

After this the soldiers led them to the sea; binding their hands behind them and hanging heavy stones about their necks, the soldiers placed them on a ship. At this time there gathered on the shore of the sea a particularly large number of friends, neighbors and acquaintances of the holy martyrs; some of them wept, in view of the death about to overtake the saints, while others extolled the brave soldiers of Christ with praises, because they had overcome the devil and were going joyfully to death for the sake of piety.

Meanwhile the commander, regretting the saints, sent to them a special messenger, Fulvius, saying that if they would merely offer incense of frankincense to the gods, they would be freed from death. But the saints did not cease to call upon Christ and to reject the vain pagan gods. At last, after long exhortations, the impious, seeing that the servants of Christ would in no case bow down to idols, prepared to cast the holy Agathopus into the sea. The latter, lifting his gaze to heaven, cried out in a loud voice:

"Behold! By this second baptism all our sins are washed away, and we depart pure to Christ Jesus!"

With these words the saint was thrown into the sea, and after him the holy Theodulus was also cast into the sea.

Thus the holy martyrs completed their struggle of suffering and received from the hand of the Lord the crown of victory. The sea, receiving the bodies of the saints, in that same hour cast them up, without chains and without stones, upon the shore. Their relatives and acquaintances, taking the bodies of the holy martyrs, buried them with honor.

After some time the holy Theodulus appeared to them with a most radiant face, clothed in white, and commanded them to distribute all his possessions to the poor, the orphans and the widows.

The holy martyrs fell asleep on the fifth day of the month of April, glorifying in heaven the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the One God, glorified in the Trinity. Amen.

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Life of Our Venerable Father Mark of Athens

Житие преподобного отца нашего Марка Афинского

Once Abba[6] Serapion related the following.

During my stay in the inner Egyptian desert[7], I once went to the great elder John, and, having received his blessing, sat down to rest, weary from the road. Dozing off, I had a vision in my sleep: there appeared to me two hermits who had come to the elder and received his blessing. They said to one another:

"Here is Abba Serapion; let us receive a blessing from him." Abba John remarked to them:

"He has only today come from the desert and is very tired; let him rest a little."

And the hermits said to the elder concerning me:

"How long already has Serapion been struggling in the desert, and yet he does not go to Father Mark, who struggles on the Mount Fraces, which is in Ethiopia[8]. There is no equal to this Mark among all the desert-dwellers and ascetics. He is one hundred and thirty years old, and ninety-five years have already passed since he began to struggle in the desert. All this time he has not seen a single human being. Not long before, some of the saints, partakers of the light of eternal life, visited him, and promised to receive him into their company."

6. Abba: father, abbot of a monastery.

7. The Inner, or Scetic, desert lay a day's journey beyond the desert of the cells, in Egypt, in Libya. It was a wild sandy desert, where springs of water were met only rarely; there was not even a beaten road to it, and the way was directed by the course of the stars.

8. Mount Phraskhe is in Libya, in present-day Tukra. Ethiopia is the country south of Egypt, that is, Nubia and Abyssinia.

While they were speaking these words to Father John, I awoke from my drowsing and, seeing no one with the elder, told him of my vision.

"This vision," the elder said to me, "is something Divine; but where is the Mount Fraces?"

"Pray for me, father!" I said to the elder.

After the prayer was completed, I took leave of the elder and went to Alexandria[9], which lay at a distance of twenty days' journey from there; but I covered this road in five days, scarcely resting either by day or by night, scorched by the sun's heat, which burned even the dust upon the earth.

Having entered Alexandria, I asked a merchant how far it still was to the Mount Fraces, which is in Ethiopia. The merchant answered me:

"Yes, father, that place is still very far. One must travel twenty days to the borders of the Ethiopians, a Hittite people[10]; and the mountain about which you ask lies still farther from here."

I asked him again:

"Approximately how much food and drink must I take for the journey, for I wish to set out there?"

"If your journey," the merchant answered, "is to be made by sea, you will not be long on the road; but if you go by land, you will be on the road thirty days."

Having heard this, I took water in a gourd and a few dates, and, trusting in God, set out on the way, and went through this desert for twenty days. During the journey I met no one, neither beast nor bird, for this desert has almost no vegetation at all, since rain and dew never fall there, so that nothing edible is to be found in it. After twenty days of travel the water I had in the gourd ran out, the dates also gave out, I was greatly exhausted and could go no farther, but I could not return either, and from weariness I lay down upon the ground. And there ap-

9. Alexandria was a city famous in antiquity, standing at the mouth of the Nile in Egypt, founded by Alexander the Great (336–323 B.C.), and in its time the center of world learning and trade.
10. The Hittites were descendants of Heth, son of Canaan (son of Noah); they lived in the mountains (Num. 13:30), in the southern part of Palestine, near Hebron (Gen. 23) and near Bethel (Judg. 1:26).

peared to me those two hermits whom I had first seen in a vision at the great elder John's. Standing before me, they said:

"Rise and come with us!"

Rising to my feet, I saw one of them bending down to the ground, turning to me and asking:

"Do you wish to refresh yourself?"

"As you see fit, father," I said.

Thereupon he showed me the root of one of the desert plants and said:

"Eat of this root, and by the power of the Lord continue your journey!"

I ate a little, and immediately felt my strength renewed, and rejoiced in my soul. I felt so vigorous that it seemed to me I had not been weary at all. Then they showed me the path by which I was to go to the holy Mark, and departed from me.

Continuing my way, I approached a high mountain which seemed to reach the heavens. Upon it there was nothing at all except dust and stones. When I came to the mountain, I saw at its edge the sea. Ascending the mountain, I walked for seven days.

When the seventh night came, I saw an Angel of God descending from heaven to the holy Mark, speaking to him:

– Blessed art thou, Abba Mark, and good shall it be for thee! Behold, we have brought to thee Father Serapion, whom thy soul desired to see, since thou wouldst not wish to see any other man beside him!

When my vision had ended, I went on fearlessly, and went until I reached the cave in which the holy Mark dwelt. When I drew near to the door of the cave, I heard the saint singing the psalms of David and saying: "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday" (Ps. 89:5), and further from the same psalm. Then, from the abundance of the spiritual joy that had seized him, the saint began to speak these words to himself:

– Blessed is thy soul, Mark, that by the help of God thou hast not defiled thyself with the impurities of this world, that thy mind has not been captivated by shameful thoughts! Blessed is thy body, for it has not sunk into the lusts and sinful passions! Blessed are thine eyes,

which the devil could not seduce by the contemplation of another's beauty! Blessed are thine ears, for they have not heard the voice of a woman in this vain world! Blessed are thy nostrils, for they have not smelt the stench of sin! Blessed are thy hands, for they have not touched any of the things that belong to men! Blessed are thy feet, which have not set foot upon the road that leads to death, and have not hastened toward sin! Thy soul is filled with spiritual life and angelic joy!

And then again he began to speak, addressing his soul: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Ps. 102:1–2). Why art thou sorrowful, O my soul? Fear not! Thou shalt not be detained in the dungeons of hell; the demons in no wise shall be able to slander thee. By the grace of God there is in thee no particular sinful vice: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Ps. 33:8). Lord, blessed is the servant who has fulfilled the will of his master."

Having uttered this and much else from Holy Scripture, to comfort his soul and to strengthen his unshakable hope in God, the Venerable Mark came out to the door of his cave, and, weeping from tenderness, called out to me, saying:

– Oh, how great is the labor of my spiritual son Serapion, who undertook the toil of seeing my dwelling!

Then, giving his blessing, he embraced me with his arms and, kissing me, said:

– For ninety-five years I have dwelt in this desert and have not seen a man. Now I see your face, which I have desired to see for many years. You have not shrunk from undertaking such a labor in order to come to me. Therefore my Lord, Jesus Christ, will reward you on the day when he judges the secret thoughts of men.

Having said this, the Venerable Mark bade me sit down.

I began to question the Venerable about his praiseworthy life. And he told me the following:

– As I have said, I have dwelt in this cave for ninety-five years. During this time I have seen not only no man, but not even a beast or a

bird; I have not eaten bread baked by the hands of men, nor have I clothed myself in garments. For thirty years I endured terrible want and sorrow from hunger, thirst, nakedness, and most of all from the devilish temptations. Tormented by hunger, I then ate the earth's dust, and, oppressed by thirst, I drank sea water. The demons swore among themselves a thousand times to drown me in the sea, and, seizing me, they dragged me with blows down to the low places of this mountain. But I climbed up again to the summit of the mountain. They, in turn, dragged me down again from there, until the skin came off my body. Dragging me and beating me, they cried out furiously:

– Begone from our land! From the beginning of the world no man has come here – how didst thou dare to come here?

After such thirty years of suffering, of such hunger, thirst, nakedness, and assaults from the demons, the grace of God and his mercy were poured out upon me. By his providence my natural flesh was changed; hair grew upon my body; in due time food is brought to me, and the Angels of the Lord visit me. I have seen as it were a likeness of the Kingdom of Heaven and of the mansions of blessedness promised to the souls of the saints, prepared for men who do good. I have seen a likeness of the divine paradise and of the tree of knowledge, of which our forefathers tasted. I have seen also the appearance in paradise of Elijah and Enoch; and there is nothing that the Lord has not shown me of what I have asked of him.

– I asked him, – Serapion relates, – tell me, Father, how and why didst thou come here?

And the saint began his account in these words:

– I was born in Athens[11], where I studied the philosophical sciences. But after the death of my parents I said to myself: "As my parents died, so shall I die. Therefore it is better that I voluntarily renounce this world before it happens that I am taken from it." And at once, taking off my clothes, I stood upon a board and set out to swim upon it

11. Athens, the capital of the ancient Greek state, was renowned in antiquity for its learning and trade. Here were the famous philosophical schools where some of the Fathers and teachers of the Church received their education.

across the sea. Carried by the waves, by divine providence I came ashore at this mountain.

When we were thus conversing together, – Serapion continues, – day came, and I saw the Venerable Mark, covered with hair like a beast, and I was terrified, for he could not be recognized as a man by anything but his voice and the words that came from his mouth. Noticing my confusion, the holy Mark said to me:

– Do not be frightened at the sight of my body, for flesh taken from corruptible earth is corruptible.

Then he asked me:

– Does the world still stand in the law of Christ in its former custom?

– Now, – I answered him, – by the grace of Christ, it is even better than in former times.

– Do idolatry and persecutions of Christians, – he asked again, – still continue to this day?

– By the help of thy holy prayers, – I answered, – the persecution has ceased and there is no idolatry.

Hearing this, the elder rejoiced with great joy. Then he asked me again:

– Are there now in the world some saints who work miracles, as the Lord said in his Gospel: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, and shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Mt. 17:20).

While the saint was uttering these words, the mountain moved from its place about five thousand cubits[12] and drew near to the sea. Saint Mark, rising up and noticing that the mountain was moving, said, addressing it:

– I did not order thee to move from thy place, but I was conversing with a brother; therefore stand thou in thy place again!

12. The cubit was a measure of length in use in antiquity, equal to the distance from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger (about ten vershoks). (A vershok was about 4.45 cm. The length of the cubit was determined as the distance from the tip of the outstretched middle finger to the bend of the elbow, and could vary up to 46 cm. – *Editors of the Azbuka Very.*)

As soon as he said this, the mountain indeed returned to its place. Seeing this, I fell face down in fear. The saint meanwhile, taking me by the hand and setting me on my feet, said to me:

– Hast thou not seen such miracles during the days of thy life?

– No, Father, – I answered.

Then the saint, sighing, wept bitterly and said:

– Woe to the earth, for Christians upon it are called such only by name, and in deed they are not such!

And again he said:

– Blessed be God, who has brought me to this holy place, that I might not die in my own country and be buried in earth defiled by many sins!

We spent the whole of that day, – Serapion relates, – in singing psalms and in spiritual conversation, and at the approach of evening the Venerable said to me:

– Brother Serapion! Is it not time for us, after prayer with thanksgiving, to partake of a meal?

To these words I made him no reply. After this he, raising his hands to heaven, began to recite the following psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Ps. 22:1).

Having finished the singing of this psalm, he, turning toward the cave, said:

– Brother, set out the meal.

Then he said to me again:

– Come, let us partake of the meal which God has sent us.

I marveled to myself, wondering for whom the holy Mark was ordering a meal to be prepared, for in the whole day I had seen no one of men in his cave.

When we entered the cave, I saw two tables standing, on which were laid two soft and white loaves, shining like snow. There were also vegetables pleasing to the eye, two baked fish, peeled olives, dates, salt, and a full cup of water, sweeter than honey. When we sat down, the holy Mark said to me:

– Child Serapion, give the blessing!

– Forgive me, Father, – I answered.

Then the saint said:

– Lord, bless!

And I noticed near the table a hand stretched down from heaven, which signed the set food with the cross. When the meal was over, Mark said:

– Brother, take this away from here!

And at once the table was taken away by an unseen hand. I marveled at everything that had happened: at the invisible servant (for the Angel of the Lord, incorporeal, by God's command served the Venerable Mark, who had become a fleshly Angel), and at the fact that in all my life I had never tasted such delicious food nor drunk such sweet water as was at that meal. Seeing my perplexity, the saint said to me:

Brother Serapion! Have you seen how many benefactions God sends to His servants! On every day I was sent by God one loaf and one fish, but now, for your sake, He has doubled the meal, sending us two loaves and two fish. Such is the repast with which the Lord God has nourished me throughout the whole time since my first sufferings. As I told you at the beginning of our conversation, during the thirty years I have dwelt in this place I have not found a single root of any plant on which I might feed. Enduring hunger and thirst out of dire necessity, I ate dust and drank bitter sea water, and I went naked and barefoot. From the frost and the terrible heat the toes of my feet fell away; the sun scorched my flesh, and I lay prostrate on the ground like a dead man. Meanwhile the demons raised their struggle against me, as against one forsaken by God. But with God's help I endured all this out of love for the Lord. When my thirty years of suffering were ended, by God's command my hair began to grow until it covered me completely, like a garment. And so, from that time until now, the demons have not been able to approach me; hunger and thirst do not overcome me; neither heat nor frost trouble me. Yet for all this I have never been ill in any way. But now the limit of my life is ending, and God has sent you here so that you may bury my humble body with your holy hands.

Then, after some interval of time, the saint again said to me:

Brother Serapion! Remain awake this night, since my death is near.

After this we both stood in prayer, chanting the Psalms of David. At the same time the saint said to me:

Brother Serapion! After my departure, lay my body in this cave, close the entrance of the cave with a stone, and depart from this cave.

Then I bowed down before the Venerable Father, and with tears I began to beg his forgiveness, and I said to him:

Pray to God, Father, that He take me also with you, that I too may go to the place where you are going.

Answering these words of mine, the saint said to me:

Do not weep on the day of my joy, but rejoice all the more. You must return to your place. May the Lord who brought you here grant you salvation for your labor and your God-pleasing life. Know, moreover, that your return from here will not be by the road by which you came here, but you will reach your place by another, unusual way.

After keeping silence for a little, the Venerable Mark then said:

Brother Serapion! This day is important to me: more important than all the days of my life. Today my soul is freed from fleshly sufferings and goes to find rest in the heavenly mansions. Today my body rests from its many labors and infirmities; today God receives me to Himself.

While the saint was speaking these words, his cave was filled with a light brighter than the light of the sun, and that mountain was filled with the fragrance of aromas.

Taking me by the hand, Serapion continues, the Venerable Mark began to speak to me thus:

"Let the cave in which I dwelt in the body, laboring for God during my life, remain until the general resurrection, and let my dead body, which became the dwelling-place of illnesses, labors and deprivations, lie here. But You, O Lord, free my soul from the body! For Your sake I endured hunger, thirst, nakedness, frost and heat and all manner of other calamities. O Master! Do You Yourself clothe me in the garment of glory on the dread day of Your coming! Close at last, my eyes, which never slumbered during my nightly prayers! Rest, my feet, which labored during the all-night standings! I depart from temporal life, and I desire salvation for all who remain upon the earth. Be saved, fasters, who for the Lord's sake wander in the mountains and caves! Be saved,

toilers, who endure every kind of deprivation to attain the Kingdom of Heaven! Be saved, prisoners of Christ, confined and exiled for righteousness, having no consolation in anything but the One God! Be saved, monasteries, laboring for God day and night! Be saved, holy churches, which serve as purification for sinners! Be saved, priests of the Lord, mediators between men and God! Be saved, children of the Kingdom of Christ, adopted to Christ through holy baptism! Be saved, lovers of Christ, who receive strangers as Christ Himself! Be saved, worthy of mercy, merciful ones! Be saved, rich, who grow rich for the Lord and spend your lives in God-pleasing works! Be saved, you who have become poor for the Lord! Be saved, pious tsars and princes, who render judgment in righteousness and mercy! Be saved, humbly wise fasters and diligent toilers! Be saved, all who love one another for Christ's sake! May the whole earth be saved, and all who live upon it in the peace and love of Christ!"

Then, Serapion relates, after saying this, the Venerable Mark turned to me, kissed me, and said: "Be saved too, Brother Serapion! I adjure you by our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that you take nothing from my humble body, not even a single hair. Let no garment touch it either, but let only the hairs with which God clothed me be buried with my body. Likewise, do not remain here."

While the saint was speaking these words, and I was weeping, a voice was heard from heaven saying: "Bring to Me from the wilderness My chosen vessel; bring Me the doer of truth, the most perfect Christian and faithful servant! Come, Mark, come! Rest in the light of joy and spiritual life!"

Then Saint Mark said to me:

Brother, let us kneel! And we knelt down.

After that I heard an angelic voice speaking to the Venerable Father:

Stretch forth your hands!

Hearing this voice, Serapion says, I immediately rose and, looking, saw the soul of the saint already freed from the bonds of the flesh; it was covered by angelic hands in a bright white garment and was borne up by them to the heavens[13]. I beheld the aerial path to heaven and the opened heavens. I saw, standing upon that path, hosts of demons, and I heard an angelic voice addressed to the demons:

Sons of darkness, flee and hide from the face of the light of truth!

The holy soul of Mark was detained in the air for about one hour. Then a voice was heard from heaven, saying to the Angels:

Take and bring here him who has put the demons to shame.

When the soul of the Venerable Father had passed without any harm to itself through the hosts of demons and was already drawing near the opened heaven, I saw, as it were, the likeness of a right hand stretched down from heaven and receiving the undefiled soul. Then this vision was hidden from my eyes, Serapion relates, and I saw nothing more.

It was about six o'clock at night; having prepared the honorable body of the saint for burial, I spent the whole night in prayer. With the coming of day I chanted with tears of joy the customary hymns over the body, kissed it, and laid it in the cave, and I closed the entrance of the cave with a stone. Then, after a long prayer, I descended the mountain, praising God and calling upon the saint to guide me on my return from this impassable and terrible wilderness. When afterwards, after sunset, I sat down to rest, suddenly the two hermits who had appeared to me before stood before me and said to me:

Brother Serapion, you have buried the body of a blessed ascetic, whom the whole world is truly unworthy of. Now, rise and continue your journey by night, for by day it is hard to travel because of the terrible heat.

Then I rose and went after those who had appeared to me, and I followed them until early morning. When the day began to draw near, they said to me:

13. The repose of St. Mark took place about 400.

Go in peace, Brother Serapion, to your place, and give thanks to the Lord God.

When I had gone a short distance from them, I noticed that I was already approaching the doors of the church located in the monastery of the great elder John. Being greatly amazed at this, I loudly glorified God and recalled the words the Venerable Mark had said to me, that my return from him would not be by the road by which I had come to him. And I believed that through the saint's prayers I had been carried invisibly. I gave thanks to our most gracious God, who arranged everything for my good, unworthy as I am, through the prayers and entreaties of His faithful servant, our Venerable Father Mark.

Hearing my voice, Abba John hastily came out of the monastery to meet me, and, greeting me, said:

By God's mercy, Abba Serapion has returned safely to us.

Then we went into the church, and I told the elder and his disciples everything that had happened to me, and we all glorified God. After this the elder said to me:

Truly, brother, here is the holy Mark, who was a most perfect Christian; while we only call ourselves Christians by name, and in deed are far removed from true Christianity. May our loving-kind and merciful God, who has received His holy servant Mark into the eternal mansions of His Heavenly Kingdom, preserve us and all His Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church from all the snares of the devil, and may He always be with us, His humble servants, and guide us to the fulfillment of His holy divine will, that we may walk in the footsteps of His great saints, our venerable fathers, so that we too, on the dread day of judgment, together with our father Mark, may receive mercy through the prayers of our Most Pure Lady the Theotokos, and of all the saints who pleased our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom befit glory, honor and worship with the Father and the most holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and unto endless ages. Amen.

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Memory of the Venerable Publius

Память преподобного Пуплия

The Venerable Publius, in the monastic rank, labored in Egypt[14] during the reign of the Emperor Julian the Apostate[15]. When this impious emperor prepared to make war upon the Persians, he sent the devil eastward, as though a scout, commanding him to investigate the route by which Julian's army was to march. Setting out, the devil came to the place where the Venerable Publius labored, but there he halted and remained ten days, unable to move from the spot. The cause of this was that the Venerable Publius, perceiving in spirit the devil's arrival in his land, took to prayer, praying with his hands raised on high, day and night, without rest, until the devil withdrew from that land[16]. Thus the devil, having learned nothing, returned to Julian. Julian asked him:

"Why did you remain so long on the road?"

The devil answered him:

"Although I remained long on the road, I came to you having investigated nothing and learned nothing. For ten days I waited for the monk Publius to finish his prayer, so that I might pass the place where this monk dwelt; but getting no such chance, I returned."

Then the impious Emperor Julian, angered, said to the devil:

"When I return from the war, I will take vengeance on that monk."

But Julian did not succeed in carrying out his lawless design, for shortly after he spoke these words he was slain by the invisible power of God.

After this, one of Julian's military commanders, having sold all his property and given the money to the poor, came to the Venerable Publius, received the tonsure into monasticism, and began to labor together

14. Egypt was a common dwelling place of many ascetics. Monasteries of monks were found both in Lower and in Middle Egypt. The desert of Nitria, located in Lower Egypt and lying inland, beyond the Nile, was especially renowned in Egypt.

15. The Roman emperor Julian the Apostate reigned from 361 to 363.

16. In just this way Moses prayed during the battle of the Israelites with the Amalekites (Ex. 17:8–13).

with him. This monk advanced greatly in virtue, living a life of strict asceticism.

The Venerable Publius labored for a considerable time after this, and at last, having pleased God by his virtuous life, passed from this life into the eternal heavenly dwellings[17].

* * *

Commemoration of our Venerable Father Plato the Confessor

Память преподобного отца нашего Платона исповедника

The Venerable Plato was the son of illustrious and at the same time pious Christian parents, named Sergius and Euphemia. From his earliest years his parents brought him up in piety and taught him Christian virtues; but before they could complete the upbringing of the youth, they died, passing from this transitory life to life without end.

Left an orphan, the Venerable was taken into the house of his relatives. While living with them he showed great progress in learning, and at the same time advanced in Christian virtues.

Having reached maturity, the Venerable left the house of his relatives and began to earn by his own labor the necessities of life. He was so industrious and at the same time so temperate that by the labor of his hands he soon acquired a large fortune. Yet the Venerable's heart was alien to attachment to the goods of this world. Therefore, having distributed all his wealth to the poor and freed his slaves, he withdrew to Mount Olympus[18], where he received the tonsure into monasticism in one of the monasteries there.

Living in the monastery, the Venerable led a very strict ascetic life, and used the time free from prayer for copying books and compiling useful collections from the writings of the Fathers of the Church. When the abbot of that monastery, Theoctistus, died, the Venerable Plato was unanimously elected abbot of the monastery. This happened in the

17. The repose of St. Publius took place in the fourth century.

18. Olympus is a mountain in the Asia Minor region of Mysia, on the border between Phrygia and Bithynia. Here was a monastery greatly renowned for the ascetic labors of its inhabitants, called the monastery "of the Symbols," where Venerable Plato labored.

thirty-fifth year of the saint's life[19]. As abbot the Venerable labored with still greater zeal, showing all the brethren of that monastery by his example a truly Christian way of life. At that time the Patriarch of Constantinople was Saint Tarasius. Having heard of the labors of the Venerable Plato, he proposed that he take upon himself the governance of the Metropolis of Nicomedia[20]. But the Venerable, desiring the solitary ascetic life, out of humility declined the governance of the metropolis and withdrew to a secluded place called Sakkoudion[21], where he afterward founded a monastery.

Because of the iconoclastic disturbances, the Empress Irene[22], then reigning, together with the Most Holy Patriarch Tarasius, convened at Nicaea[23] the Seventh Ecumenical Council[24], at which the impious teaching of the iconoclast heretics was condemned, and at the same time the veneration of the holy icons and their worship were restored and confirmed. More than three hundred Fathers gathered for the council; among them was the Venerable Plato. As a man well read and skilled in the Divine Scriptures, he was very useful at the council, for he boldly defended the teaching of Orthodoxy and courageously exposed the teaching of the heretics.

When the sessions of the council ended, the Venerable Plato withdrew to the place of his labors, Sakkoudion. This locality was as beautiful as it was suitable for the labors of solitude. Situated on a mountain,

19. This was in 770.

20. Nicomedia was a city in the Asia Minor region of Bithynia, situated in the northeastern corner of the gulf formed by the Sea of Marmara. Nicomedia was founded in 264 B.C. by the Bithynian king Nicomedes I, from whom it received its name. Nicomedia was a favorite residence of Roman emperors and commanders when they made campaigns in the east. At present the site of ancient Nicomedia is occupied by the small town of Izmit.

21. This place was not far from Mount Olympus.

22. St. Irene, wife of Emperor Leo the Khazar, governed the state after his death during the minority of her son Constantine VI Porphyrogenitus, from 780 to 790, and afterward independently from 797 to 802. Her memory is celebrated on August 7.

23. In church history Nicaea is known as the site of two Ecumenical Councils: the first, held in 325, convened to condemn the heresy of Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria (who denied the equality of the Son of God with God the Father), and the seventh, of which we speak here. Nicaea was in antiquity a rich and flourishing city in the Asia Minor region of Bithynia. At present the site of ancient Nicaea is occupied by the very poor and sparsely populated town of Iznik.

24. The Council was convened in 787.

it was surrounded on all sides by tall beautiful trees; the only access to it was a narrow path, barely visible amid the thickets of the forest.

Together with Plato there labored his nephew Theodore. Soon they built here a church in the name of Saint John the Theologian.

Meanwhile the fame of the saint's labors spread more and more, and many people began to come to him, seeking instruction and guidance in the Christian life. When the number of the Venerable's disciples increased, he established there a monastery[25], and the Venerable himself discharged the duties of abbot.

By his ascetic life the Venerable Plato set a good example for all the brethren to emulate. His nephew, the blessed Theodore, imitated him with especial zeal, spending days and nights in unceasing labors of prayer and contemplation.

Seeing the virtuous life of Theodore, the Venerable Plato rejoiced greatly on his account. Resolving to honor the blessed Theodore with the sacred rank, the Venerable went with him to Byzantium to the Most Holy Patriarch Tarasius, who ordained Theodore to the rank of presbyter. Yet this was done less by his own good will than by his obedience, for the blessed one, considering himself unworthy of such a rank, did not wish to accept it, and said that this rank was beyond his strength. But being unable to oppose the will of his spiritual father, and also the will of the Patriarch, he submitted and received the priesthood. When the Venerable Theodore returned to his monastery in the new priestly rank, he continued to labor here with still greater diligence and zeal.

After some years, the Venerable Plato, having become infirm through his many labors and his advanced age, resolved to lay down the leadership of the monastery, and wished that after him the authority of abbot should be taken by the blessed Theodore. He often spoke to him of this, begging him to release him from the heavy burden of governing the monastery. But the blessed Theodore each time refused the abbacy, preferring rather to live under the direction of others than to direct anyone himself, and judging that for the salvation of the soul it

25. This monastery was founded by Venerable Plato in 782.

was easier and more profitable to receive instruction from others than to instruct anyone oneself.

The Venerable Plato, seeing that it was difficult for him to overcome the humility of the blessed Theodore, resolved to do the following: he took to his bed as though ill—for in fact he was weak—and, calling all the brethren together, told them that he felt the approach of his death, and then asked them:

"Whom do you wish to have as abbot after me? Who, in your judgment, is best fitted for this?"

The Venerable knew that the brethren would wish to have Theodore as their abbot, since everyone loved and esteemed him for his great virtues. So it happened. All answered the question put to them with one voice:

"After you, let Theodore be our abbot!"

Then the Venerable Plato handed over his authority to the blessed Theodore, since the latter could not resist the wish of all the brethren. Having taken upon himself the rank of abbot, the blessed Theodore at the same time redoubled his labors, becoming a model for all and teaching all a virtuous life not only by word but also by deed.

At that time Emperor Constantine, son of the pious Empress Irene, came of age, removed his mother from the imperial throne, and took the administration of the state into his own hands[26]. Being young and corrupt, he gave himself to various sorts of sins. Thus he resolved to put away his wife Maria, and to this end forcibly tonsured her into monasticism; in her place he took as his wife another, named Theodote, who was a relative of his father[27]. The Most Holy Patriarch Tarasius did not approve of this lawless act of the emperor and would not bless his marriage. But a presbyter named Joseph, who was steward of the Church of Constantinople[28], transgressed the Divine laws and, disobeying the Patriarch, agreed to perform the sacrament of marriage over the emperor.

26. This was in 790, when Constantine had reached the age of twenty.

27. The first wife of the Emperor Constantine VI Porphyrogenitus was Maria, granddaughter of St. Philaret the Merciful (commemorated December 1), whom he wed at the will of his mother. The emperor's second marriage, to Theodote, who until then had been a lady-in-waiting at court, was concluded in 795.

Hearing of this, the blessed Theodore, together with the Venerable Plato, was deeply grieved in soul. Kindled with zeal for the law of God, Theodore, together with Saint Plato, sent to all the monks an epistle in which he reported the imperial lawlessness and urged everyone to regard the emperor as cut off from the Church of Christ, as a destroyer of the law of God.

The rumor of this zeal and boldness of the Blessed Theodore and Plato spread everywhere, so that the emperor himself, the one they rebuked, also learned of it. Greatly angered with the holy men, he commanded that Venerable Theodore, after cruel tortures, be exiled and confined in Thessalonica[29], and Plato be thrown into prison.

After the death of the impious emperor, Venerable Plato was released from prison, and St. Theodore was recalled from exile. Meanwhile, because of the constant raids of the Agarenes[30], who were laying waste and seizing various regions of the Byzantine Empire, St. Theodore left Sakkoudion, not wishing to expose the lives of the brethren of the monastery to danger, and came with the brethren to Constantinople, where he took charge of the famous Stoudios Monastery[31].

Venerable Plato, who once bore the rank of abbot, now came as a humble monk to the Blessed Theodore and began to labor in his monas-

28. The office of steward (oikonomos) of the Church of Constantinople was one of the most important offices under the Patriarch of Constantinople. The steward (from oikonomeo, "I manage a household") not only managed the patriarch's household and kept his treasury, but also took part in deciding questions of the governance of the patriarchate itself.

29. Thessalonica, or Salonica, a very considerable city of ancient Macedonia, lying on the shore of the Gulf of Salonica (Thermaic Gulf), on the Aegean Sea (Archipelago). In the history of the Russian Church this city is known as the birthplace of the holy first teachers of the Slavs, Cyril and Methodius, and it may be counted among the first trading cities (after Constantinople) of European Turkey.

30. Agarenes: the Muslims, the Arabs, so called after Hagar, the concubine of Abraham and mother of Ishmael, from whom the tribe of the Arabs descended. Taking advantage of the constant disorders and internal strife at the Byzantine court, the Agarenes at that time made devastating raids upon the borders of the Byzantine Empire.

tery. Venerable Plato humbled himself to such a degree that he voluntarily put chains on his feet, and continually devoted himself to the ascetic labors of fasting and prayer.

Soon after this, Emperor Nicephorus[32] unlawfully seized the Byzantine throne, and by his own authority restored to the Church the aforementioned presbyter Joseph, whom Patriarch Tarasius had excommunicated for his lawless deed. When St. Theodore, together with the brethren, afterward rebuked the emperor for acting contrary to the canons of the Church, the emperor was greatly angered at him and at all the brethren of the Stoudios monastery, and sent them all, together with the most blessed Elder Plato, into exile on one of the islands near the city[33].

After spending four years in exile, Venerable Plato, already in deep old age, returned to Constantinople, where he settled again in the Stoudios monastery.

Having labored much and diligently in that monastery, Venerable Plato lived there three more years, and at last departed to the Lord, that he might stand with the other saints before His throne and glorify Him in heaven forever[34]. Amen.

* * *

Memory of Venerable Theodora of Thessalonica

Память преподобной Феодоры Солунской

Venerable Theodora was descended from pious Christian parents, Antony and Chrysanthe, who lived on the island of Aegina[35].

31. The Venerable Theodore the Studite was appointed abbot of the Monastery of Stoudios in 798. The Stoudios Monastery received its name from its founder, the Roman patrician (a person of the highest rank, corresponding to our nobility) Stoudios. Stoudios built in Constantinople a large and beautiful church in the name of St. John the Forerunner and established beside it a monastery, inviting to it monks of the Constantinopolitan community of the "Akoimetoi" ("Sleepless"), founded in the fifth century. Thus was laid the beginning of the existence of the Stoudios Monastery.
32. The Emperor Nicephorus I reigned from 802 to 811.
33. This was in 807.
34. The repose of the Venerable Plato took place in 814, on Lazarus Sunday, in the 79th year of the saint's life.
35. Aegina is an island in the Saronic Gulf of the Archipelago, between Argolis and Attica.

This pious couple lived at the time when the holy Church was troubled by the iconoclastic heresy, in the reign of Emperor Michael[36]. But the pious spouses were not confused by the iconoclastic teaching, but shone like lamps with their orthodoxy. From such pious parents Venerable Theodora was descended.

Upon reaching full age, Theodora entered into marriage; soon she bore a daughter. Because of an enemy invasion, the young spouses moved to Thessalonica.

When Theodora's daughter reached full age, Venerable Theodora dedicated her to the service of God in one of the Thessalonian monasteries; and afterward, upon the death of her husband, she herself settled in that monastery, taking the monastic tonsure.

Living in the monastery, Venerable Theodora led a strictly ascetic life. Strengthened by the grace of God, she, by her labors of obedience and humility, by fasting and prayer, so pleased the Lord that she performed miracles not only during her life but also after her death[37]. Thus, when, after the repose of the Venerable one, the abbess of that monastery died, and when they laid her body near the coffin of St. Theodora, a great miracle occurred: Venerable Theodora, as if alive, moved together with her coffin, as if yielding place to her superior and showing her humility even after death. All who saw this miracle were struck with terror and cried aloud:

"Lord, have mercy!"

From the holy relics of Venerable Theodora there flowed fragrant myrrh, by which many miracles were wrought: demons were cast out, the blind received sight, and many sick people received healing from their ailments, to the glory of Christ our God.

On the same day, the memory of the Venerable Fathers Theona, Simeon and Forvin.

* * *

36. Michael I Rangabe, Byzantine emperor, reigned from 811 to 813.
37. The repose of the Venerable Theodora took place in 879.

ALSO COMMEMORATED THIS DAY

On the same day, the memory of the Venerable Fathers Theona, Simeon and Forvin.

NOTES

2394. Diocletian, with whose name is associated the idea of the last cruel persecution of Christians by the pagans, ascended the Roman throne in 284 and reigned until 305. In 285 he, recognizing the difficulty of governing the vast empire alone, chose as co-ruler one of his commanders, the valiant Maximian (Herculius), entrusting to him, with the title of Augustus, the western half of the empire. In 292 he chose two more assistants in the administration, with the title of Caesars: Constantius Chlorus for Britain, Gaul and Spain, and Galerius for Illyricum. Diocletian moved his court from Rome to Nicomedia (this city was on the Asian shore of the Propontis, the Sea of Marmara), as a result of which old Rome gradually lost its significance. Chiefly under the influence of Caesar Galerius, Diocletian issued four edicts, or decrees, against Christians and was one of the most cruel of their persecutors.

THE SIXTH DAY OF APRIL

April 6

6 апреля

New Calendar April 6 · Old Calendar April 19 (civil dates)

Life of Our Holy Father Eutychius, Archbishop of Constantinople

Житие во святых отца нашего Евтихия, архиепископа Константинопольского

The birthplace of St. Eutychius was a village in Phrygia called "Divine." Afterwards St. Eutychius fenced this village with stone walls, built here a large church in the name of the Forty Martyrs, and settled in it virtuous men, and chiefly monks who lived as Angels do; for he desired that the village should be Divine not only in name but also in fact. Thus, through the saint's labors, the whole place became a strong city. The parents of St. Eutychius were Alexander, a soldier, and Synesia, the daughter of the honorable and virtuous priest Hesychius, who served in the church of Augustopolis. Once, when Synesia was carrying this blessed fruit in her womb, as she lay upon her bed she saw herself bathed in an ineffable light; she was terrified and wondered what this might mean. This vision, however, foretold the spiritual light that was to be born of her, the enlightener of many who remained in the darkness of error.

The Lord sanctified His servant even as He had sanctified the Prophet Jeremiah, appointing him before his birth to be the light of the world and a great hierarch. The boy was baptized by his grandfather, the aforementioned priest Hesychius, and received from him his first instruction in books. Already in childhood there were signs of Eutychius' future rank. Many children, peers of Eutychius, studied with the priest Hesychius, and once, during their games, they began to write their names on the wall, each naming himself by some rank, one as a priest, another by some other office; the blessed Eutychius wrote himself with

the title of patriarch: "Eutychius the Patriarch." In this he was as it were prophetically foretelling that God would in the future grant him the honor of the patriarchate. When St. Eutychius reached the age of twelve, his parents and grandfather sent him to Constantinople for further education. Excelling all his fellows in the study of secular learning, he clearly understood that external wisdom in itself is not, as the holy Apostle James says, "from above," but "earthly, sensual, demonic," that is, seeking earthly goods, serving the carnal lusts of a passionate soul, and bringing forth no spiritual fruit to those who love it; whereas "the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits" (Jas. 3:17), with which those who assimilate this wisdom are nourished. Thus the prudent youth Eutychius, being a man of understanding, diligently sought the wisdom that is from above; having found it, he resolved in his mind to labor not for the world but for God in the company of monks. When he had reached the years of mature manhood and was pondering monasticism as an unshakable intention, then, by divine providence, a small obstacle arose which held him back from taking the monastic vows for a time. It was as follows: the metropolitan of Amasia[1] and some other notable persons of that city urgently persuaded the blessed man to accept the episcopacy over the city of Lazica[2] without becoming a monk. Obeying the will of the metropolitan and the others as the decision of the Lord Himself, the blessed Eutychius gave himself, like a lamb to the shearer, into the hands of the Bishop of Amasia, who at that time was delayed in Constantinople on church business. Taking Eutychius, he brought him into the church of the Most Holy Virgin Theotokos, called Urbikios', after its founder, the eastern voivode Urbikios, and here, in a separate place, in the baptistery, he tonsured him as a church cleric. By chance, during Eutychius' tonsure, his cut hair fell into the holy water in the baptistery, and those present marveled, saying that the mother who had given him spiritual birth (that is, baptism), the holy font, had

1. Amaseia, a city in Asiatic Turkey, in the vilayet of Sivas, with 15,000 inhabitants, has 18 medresses (higher schools), in which 2,000 softas (students) are educated. Formerly Amaseia was the residence of the kings of Pontus; it has many antiquities; birthplace of the historian Strabo.

2. To the south-west of Amaseia, within the bounds of Galatia

received his hair into herself and so became his sponsor at his tonsure as a cleric. Then the blessed Eutychius was ordained deacon, and in his thirtieth year he was ordained priest. And when the blessed Eutychius was on the point of assuming the rank of bishop, the providence of God, arranging a better future for His servant, changed the circumstances, and another man received the episcopacy of Lazica. Then St. Eutychius, returning again to his original intention, withdrew to one of the monasteries of Amasia and here took the monastic habit. This monastery had been founded by the holy men Meletius, Uranius and Seleucus, of whom the first and last, each in his own time, had been bishops of the Church of Amasia and had reposed in the Lord in this hierarchal rank, miraculously granting healing to the sick from their tombs. Of the great Seleucus it is related that he was a wonderworker even in his lifetime. Once in the region of Amasia there was a severe famine, and countless beggars and paupers came to St. Seleucus, so that at last all his stores of bread were exhausted. The man in charge of distributing bread, having no possibility of helping those who asked and unable to bear their complaints, came to the saint and gave him the keys to the granaries. Taking the keys, the saint laid them on his bed and all that night prayed to God that He would take pity on the people who were near death from hunger, and with His almighty hand send them food from sources known to Him alone. In the morning they found the granary filled with wheat to such an extent that the doors could not even be opened. All the people then began to take the wheat freely, each as much as he needed and as much as he could carry, and the wheat that was taken away did not diminish. Some took the wheat by measure and by count, and according to the record it was found that the number of measures carried out of Seleucus' granary, multiplied by God through the saint's prayers, reached ten myriads (that is, a hundred thousand measures); so is the story of St. Seleucus told. In like manner healings from every kind of illness were granted at the tomb of St. Uranius, who once occupied the episcopal see of Iberia and was buried there. Such great men had established the Amasian monastery, in which afterwards the Venerable Eutychius, having taken on the angelic image with the habit of a monk, girded his loins with truth, and, taking

up the whole armor of God, was appointed archimandrite over all the monasteries of the Amasian metropolis, where he showed himself a dependable guide to those living in monastic life.

At that time Justinian the Great reigned.[3] When the hierarchs were summoned to the Fifth Ecumenical Council,[4] it happened that the Metropolitan of Amasia fell ill, and he asked Venerable Archimandrite Eutychius to go to Constantinople in his stead and attend the Council. As blessed Eutychius was making ready for the journey, he had the following vision in a dream. He saw the finger of God stretched forth from the vault of heaven, pointing to a very high mountain above the monastery, on which stood the church of the Holy Martyr Thalelaeus; and there was a voice from on high addressed to Eutychius: "There you shall be a bishop." Awakening from his dream, the saint marvelled at the vision and wondered what it might mean. It foretold the high dignity of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, to which, by God's blessing, he was soon to be raised.

When Venerable Eutychius arrived in Constantinople, the aged and most holy Patriarch Menas, already near death, saw the blessed one and prophetically told his clergy that he would be patriarch after him. He ordered St. Eutychius to reside in his patriarchal house, where he held heartfelt conversations with him, delighting in his God-inspired words. Having informed the emperor of Venerable Eutychius's prudence and upright conduct, Menas sent him to the emperor. By chance, some heretics were at the emperor's court at that very hour. They began to dispute with the saint concerning the dogmas of the

3. Emperor Justinian reigned from 527 to 565. He was born in 482 or 483, the son of an Illyrian peasant. Taken by his uncle – afterwards Emperor Justinian I – to Constantinople to the court of Emperor Anastasius, Justinian received a good education, and after the death of his uncle, who had earlier adopted him, ascended the throne. He glorified his reign by the subjugation of the Vandal and Ostrogothic kingdoms.

4. The Fifth Ecumenical Council was convened in May 553 at Constantinople. There were present 165 bishops. Among them were all the Eastern patriarchs, but from the West there were only 5 African bishops. The president was Eutychius, Patriarch of Constantinople; the council was convened for the final decision of the question concerning Theodore of Mopsuestia, the Blessed Theodoret, and Ibas of Edessa. At the same time the council confirmed the doctrinal definitions of all the previous Ecumenical Councils, including that of Chalcedon.

faith, but were powerless to withstand the wisdom and spirit with which Venerable Eutychius spoke. The question was whether heretics should be anathematized even after their death. Some maintained that anathema should not be pronounced upon heretics whose heresy had been discovered only after their death. St. Eutychius, on the contrary, maintained that heretics should in every way be delivered to anathema, even after death. As an example from Scripture, he cited Josiah, king of Jerusalem, who took the bones of the dead idolaters from their tombs and burned them in the fire, many years after their death; in like manner, the saint declared, heretics should be punished even after their death.

From that time Venerable Eutychius began to enjoy the emperor's favor, and all praised and honored him. At that time, before the Council had begun, the most holy Patriarch Menas fell ill and, at a very advanced age, departed to the Lord. Many men invested with spiritual rank then sought this honor for themselves from the emperor by gifts and petitions. But the emperor, whose heart is in God's hand, was thinking of blessed Eutychius. He instructed one of his advisers, a man of distinction named Peter, to keep watch secretly over the Archimandrite of Amasia, lest the latter, shunning worldly fame, secretly flee from Constantinople.

Then the saint had another vision in a dream, which he himself later related to those of his household. "It seemed to me," he said, "that I saw a great and very bright house, and in it a bed adorned with costly ornament. Seated upon this bed was a certain noble woman named Sophia, who called me to her and began to show me her adornments. After this, I saw that the roof of the house was covered with snow, and upon the snow stood a boy named Soterichus, who was about to slip and fall from the roof. But I forestalled this, brought him down from the roof and the snow, and saved him from falling." This vision came to him on the night before his election to the patriarchate, and it was fulfilled in every respect. For the woman named Sophia whom he had seen signified none other than the cathedral church of Hagia Sophia in Con-

stantinople, while her adornments signified the affairs of the Church. The boy Soterichus, about to fall from the roof, signified the confession of the faith, which was near to wavering and falling into heresy and required the swift help of a worthy defender.

The emperor likewise received a divine revelation concerning Venerable Eutychius, as he himself declared under oath to all his government and to the clergy of the Great Church. "Once," the emperor related, "I was at prayer in the church of the Holy Apostle Peter at Aphir,[5] where I dozed and saw this chief Apostle pointing with his hand at Eutychius and saying to me: 'Let this man be appointed your bishop.'" Hearing this, all cried out with one voice: "He is worthy! He is worthy!" Thus, by divine will and revelation, St. Eutychius was raised to the throne of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the fortieth year of his life.

At the very beginning of his patriarchate, after the holy fathers had assembled in Constantinople, the Fifth Ecumenical Council was opened. Pope Vigilius of Old Rome, Apollinarius, Patriarch of Alexandria, and Domnus of Antioch were present; together with the most holy Patriarch of New Rome, Eutychius, and the other holy fathers, they confirmed the Orthodox faith, anathematizing the heretics and their impious doctrines.

While St. Eutychius was governing Christ's Church in peace, the devil, through his servants the heretics, stirred up persecution against him. Several years later, Emperor Justinian, having been secretly beguiled by the heretics, inclined to their side and, under the guise of piety, began to sow the heresy of the Aphthartodocetae,[6] that is, the "incor-

5. Aphir – a city on the shore of the Sea of Marmara.

6. Among the various opinions arising from the Monophysite dispute, one stood out, supported by Julian of Halicarnassus. He professed that the body of the Savior was incorruptible, that it was exempt from death, just as the body of Adam would have been exempt from it had he remained in his innocence; that it was the same before and after the resurrection; that its hunger, thirst and weariness did not proceed in any way from the composition of his human nature, but were sensations to which He voluntarily subjected Himself. The Aphthartodocetae called their opponents Phthartolatrae (that is, worshippers of the corruptible).

ruptibility-affirmers," who maintained that Christ's flesh, by reason of its union with the Divinity, had remained incorruptible before His death and resurrection and had not shared in human sufferings. By spreading this heretical teaching, the emperor troubled the Church, compelling all to believe and confess as he did.

The most holy Patriarch Eutychius resisted this, pointing out that such a teaching belonged not to the Orthodox Church but to the heretics. On the basis of Holy Scripture and the writings of the holy fathers, he showed that Christ's flesh was like our corruptible flesh in all things save sin, and was susceptible to suffering. For, born of the Most Pure Virgin, it was wrapped in swaddling clothes, nourished with milk, underwent circumcision, and throughout His earthly life required food and drink. How, then, could flesh incorruptible and not susceptible to suffering have endured the nails and the spear for us? Its incorruptibility could mean only that it was free from the corruption of sin and did not decay in the tomb.

But the emperor not only refused to hear the patriarch's Orthodox teaching; he also tried in every way to compel him to confirm with his signature the supposed truth of the emperor's heretical teaching. And because the patriarch would not sign the emperor's unorthodox doctrine, the latter was greatly angered with him. After many disputes on both sides, Emperor Justinian, instigated by the heretics, especially the provincial governors Etherius and Addaeus, gathered a lawless assembly of bishops who shared his views. This took place in the twelfth year of Eutychius's patriarchate. The emperor brought false accusations against the innocent and holy patriarch before this assembly and, having those charges confirmed by false witnesses, obtained his unjust condemnation. Thus he deprived of his throne the good shepherd, the holy man and Orthodox hierarch Eutychius, and chose in his place a certain false shepherd, John surnamed Scholasticus, an impious and man-pleasing man.

On the twenty-second of January, the feast of the Holy Apostle

Timothy, St. Eutychius was led out of the church by soldiers. The provincial governor Etherius came with weapons and a spear, roaring like a savage beast, and ordered that the saint be dragged out by force. He stripped him of his hierarchal vestments and sent him into exile in the region of Amasia. Yet Etherius himself did not escape God's vengeance, but in due time perished together with his like-minded friend Addaeus. Etherius lost his rank, his wealth, and his life. On the same day, the third of October, both were justly condemned to death for their malice: their heads were cut off with an axe.[7]

Meanwhile St. Eutychius, the Hierarch of Christ, having been removed to the district of Amasia, remained in fasting and prayer in his monastery, where he worked many miracles, healing human infirmities by the grace of Christ. Let us set down here some of these miracles of St. Eutychius. In the city of Amasia there lived a man named Androgynus together with his wife. The husband and wife grieved greatly, for their children were born dead; the child died before coming into the light. With supplication and tears, like the Shunammite woman once before Elisha, the spouses came to the Hierarch of God, asking him to pray to God on their behalf, that He would grant them to see their children alive. The saint, anointing both spouses with holy oil that had flowed from the Life-giving Cross and from the icon of the Most Holy Theotokos at Sozopolis, said to them: "Name the infant who is in the womb (the wife was pregnant) Peter, and he will remain alive." The presbyter Eustathius, who was then with the Hierarch (the compiler of this Life), asked: "But if a child of the female sex is born, what name shall we give her?" The saint, however, prophetically affirmed that a male infant would be born, who was to be named Peter. In due time the wife bore a male child; they named him Peter, and the child remained alive and grew. Afterward she bore a second son, and, bringing him in her arms to the Hierarch of God, asked how the newborn should be named. "Let him be called John," the saint answered, "since the Lord has heard your prayer in the church of St. John." Both infants grew to manhood and became the heirs of their parents. A presbyter from a

7. John III Scholasticus governed the Constantinopolitan see from 565 to 577.

church settlement brought to the man of God Eutychius his fourteen-year-old deaf-mute son, named Nunechius. Anointing him with holy oil, the saint opened his hearing and loosed his tongue, so that the deaf-mute began to hear and to speak. Yet another of the church clergy, named Cyril, had a five-year-old son who was also mute and, from illness, lay between life and death; the Hierarch of God, by his prayer, made him well too and granted him the power of speech. Once there was brought to the saint a four-year-old infant from the city of Zela[8], completely wasted, almost without flesh, only bones covered with skin. He could eat nothing either, except that he sucked a little from his mother's breasts. He too received healing at the saint's hands, being anointed with holy oil. By the prayer of the Saint of Christ, St. Eutychius, and by the anointing with holy oil, another child, the son of a painter of Amasia, who had suddenly fallen ill and was ready to die, was also snatched from the very gates of death. A woman was going about her business to the city with her seven-year-old son and other people. An innocent child was stung in the legs by an evil demon that met them on the way, and lay on the ground, completely unable to rise. The mother, together with her companions, lifting up the child, brought him to the monastery to the blessed patriarch, with tears entreating him to show his mercy and heal the infant. By his customary remedy, prayer and holy oil, the Hierarch restored the child's health, and he walked as well as before the misfortune. Near the city of Amasia there was a women's monastery called Flavia. From this monastery a young maiden was brought to the saint who could not receive the Divine Mysteries. Before Communion a sudden fear and trembling would come upon her, and she turned away from the Holy Mysteries with a dreadful cry. When they tried to put the Holy Mysteries into her mouth by force, she immediately spat them out as an unbearable bitterness, for an evil spirit was in her. Having earnestly prayed to God for her, the Hierarch of God cast the evil demon out of her. The maiden, receiving healing, calmly took the Divine Mysteries from the hands of the Hier-

8. Zela, to the south of Amasia, on the river Iris, in the kingdom of Pontus, built on a hill. In the war of the Romans with the Pontians in 67 B.C., the Roman praetor Triarius was defeated here by Mithridates. Today the village of Zelekh in Asia Minor, in the Turkish vilayet of Sivas.

arch. A young man, skilled at adorning churches with mosaic, was in the house of Chrysaphius, a citizen of Amasia, chipping old mosaic from the walls and depicting holy icons anew in its place. Among these there was, by chance, an ancient image of the naked Venus[9]. When the young man began to destroy this image on the wall, the demon present with it struck his hand with a most painful disease called cancer[10]. The hand swelled, festered terribly, and an incurable wound resulted. All who saw the diseased hand said that it must be amputated, lest the rest of the body rot. Being in great sorrow from so terrible a disease, the young man came with bitter weeping to the man of God Eutychius, entreating a cure for his health, which he had irrevocably lost. Offering prayer to God for him and anointing the diseased hand with holy oil, the saint healed the young man on the third day and sent him away in health. Having destroyed the image of shameless Venus with the healed hand, the young man depicted on the very spot where he had received the disease his selfless physician, the most holy Patriarch Eutychius. In a similar way the saint healed another young man's hand, damaged by an incurable disease, which the physicians advised cutting off. Once there was brought to the saint a demoniac youth who constantly suffered most cruel torments. When the blessed one signed him with the sign of the Cross with prayer and anointed his forehead with holy oil, the demonic power, as if pierced by a fiery spear, began to cry out in a terrible voice, pouring out foam and gnashing its teeth. Then it could be understood that the youth was tormented not by one but by many demons. Afterward, grown numb, the youth lay on the ground as one dead, but after a little time he again began to suffer the same, and even much greater, torments for many days. The saint wondered why the demonic possession did not leave the youth over so long a time, and the Hierarch bade his presbyter Eustathius (the compiler of this Life) ask the youth who he was, whence he came, where he lived, what he did, and how the possession had begun in him. To these questions the youth related everything about himself in detail. "I," he said, "was a

9. Venus among the Romans, Aphrodite among the Greeks – goddess of love and beauty – wife of Hephaestus, born from the sea foam. She was depicted naked.
10. Cancer – the crab.

monk in the monastery of St. John, located in the Acropolis. Then I cast off the monastic life, departed into the world, married, committed a multitude of sins, and now, for this very thing, as you see, I am punished by God and suffer; but if you have any means, help me." Having heard this, the saint, as was his custom, offered fervent prayer to God, while exhorting the youth to return again to his former monastery and become a monk. When the youth, with sincere readiness, promised to do so, he was at once freed from the demonic torment through the prayers of the Hierarch of God Eutychius. Once a leper came to the Venerable Father with a request for healing, and he received health, with a commandment from the saint never to drink wine.

Another man, during a lawsuit with his neighbor, swore falsely in court, and by the vengeance of the Righteous Judge, God, he lost his sight and for a whole year did not see the light. Led by others, he came in repentance to this wonderworker, confessing before him his sin, and at the same time seeking healing for his spiritual ailment and, together with it, for his bodily infirmity. By the divine mercy, through the episcopal authority and the prayers of this Hierarch of Christ pleasing to the Lord, he received both, and returned home seeing with his eyes as before.

To the good physician, the Hierarch Eutychius, there flocked a countless multitude of men, women and children suffering from many different diseases, and through his prayers all received speedy healing. During the invasion of the Persians a great multitude of people gathered in Amasia from the surrounding regions and cities captured and laid waste by the enemy; their crowding caused a severe famine here. Then the man of God arranged that food did not run short in his monastery. Every day an innumerable multitude of people came to his monastery to receive food, and at last the monastery stewards once informed the saint that, since grain and flour had run short, they not only had nothing to give to those who came, but they themselves had nothing to live on. Then the Venerable Father, entering the granary and the storehouse and indeed observing their complete depletion, prayed to God and, comforting the brethren, said: "Trust in God and believe that whatever you give to those in need, God will return to you twofold. I

firmly hope in the mercy of God: just as in the days of the prophet Elijah at Zarephath of Sidon the widow's jar did not run short (see 3 Kgdms. 17:16), so too among us at present there will be no lack of what is necessary, but all will eat and be satisfied, and will glorify the Lord our God." According to the faith and words of the saint, so indeed it came to pass, for not only did the bread that was constantly distributed not diminish, but from time to time its quantity increased: the more bread was given out to those who came, the more there multiplied of everything in the granary and storehouse, so that in the days of famine all the wayfarers, strangers, and members of his own household were fed in abundance.

The holy Eutychius was not without the gift of prophecy either. Three years before the death of the Emperor Justinian, the nephew of the Emperor, Justin, who then held a court rank and was travelling somewhere on imperial service, happened to be in Amasia. Having taken him aside, the blessed Eutychius said to him: "Hear me, my lord kouropalates!* Though I am a sinner, I am nevertheless the servant and priest of my God, Who has revealed to me that after the death of your uncle you shall reign. Therefore beware, lest in occupying yourself with many affairs you neglect yourself; watch over yourself, that you may prove worthy of the service which shall soon be laid upon you by the will of the Lord." Justin, having listened, gave thanks to God and asked the holy prophet for the help of his prayers. In the same manner he afterwards foretold the same thing in a letter to Tiberius, the prefect of the city, who was to succeed Justin on the throne. The holy Eutychius wrote to him in Syria as follows: "God has now granted you only in part the governance of the people, but very soon He will place in your hands the whole helm of imperial rule," which soon came to pass.

After the death of the Emperor Justinian, his nephew Justin ascended the imperial throne; and when the aforementioned Patriarch of Constantinople John Scholasticus died, the most holy Patriarch Eutychius, after twelve years and eight months of exile, was restored to the throne to the unspeakable joy of all the people, who met him on land and on sea, crying out, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" He took up his throne on Sunday, the third of October, on

which day, shortly before, by order of the new emperor, the enemies of St. Eutychius, the provincial governors Eferius and Addeus, had been condemned and put to death.

For the remaining days of his life the most holy Patriarch Eutychius lived in peace, adorning the Church with Orthodox teaching and with miracles: by his prayer he suddenly stopped a plague that had broken out, and he healed the sick. After this he himself, paying the debt of nature, fell ill on the feast of the bright Resurrection of Christ. The pious Emperor Tiberius came to visit him, and the saint foretold to the emperor his own speedy death after that of the saint, which came to pass. Falling ill during Bright Week, the most holy Eutychius, on Thomas Sunday, gathered all his clergy, and having given all peace, blessing and a last kiss, at nightfall fell asleep in the Lord with the sleep of temporal death; his holy soul departed into the unfading eternal day to the holy hierarchs. St. Eutychius had occupied the patriarchal throne, after his return from confinement, four years and six months; the total years of his life were seventy. St. Eutychius was honorably buried in the Church of the Apostles beneath the steps of the sanctuary, where the relics of the holy Apostles Andrew, Timothy and Luke were kept[11].

After the repose of the most holy Patriarch Eutychius, the pious Emperor Tiberius lived only four months and eight days and, in accordance with the saint's prophecy, died in peace. For all this let us glorify the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God in the Trinity. Amen.

Kontakion, Tone 8:

Let us all, O people, faithfully sing the praises of the divine Eutychius with love, as a great shepherd and servant, a wise teacher and expeller of heresies, for he entreats the Lord for us all.

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11. Patriarch Eutychius died in 582. In 1246 the body of St. Eutychius was transferred from the Church of the Apostles at Constantinople to Venice. He governed the Patriarchate of Constantinople for the first time from 562 to 565, and a second time from 577 to 582.

* Kouropalates – a Byzantine court office, originally connected with the highest guard of the imperial palace (φυλακή της αὐλής), later becoming purely honorary.

* * *

Memory of the Venerable Platonida

Память преподобной Платониды

St. Platonida was at first a deaconess.[2444] Then, striving for the exploits of the solitary life, she left the world and withdrew into the wilderness of Nisibis,[12] where she founded a monastery for virgins.

By her pious and truly ascetic life the Venerable Platonida gave a good example for the sisters of the monastery to imitate.

The rule of the monastery founded by Platonida was marked by particular strictness: the sisters took food only once a day, and spent all their time free from prayer in various kinds of labor and occupations, especially needlework. But on Friday, as the day of remembrance of the saving sufferings and cross-death of the Lord for us, all activities in the monastery ceased and the entire day was devoted only to prayer and contemplation. On this day the sisters remained in the church from morning until evening, where in the intervals between prayers they listened to the reading and interpretation of Holy Scripture.

Teaching everyone not only by word but also by deed, and pleasing God by her virtuous life, the Venerable Platonida died and departed to the Lord from this temporal life, that she might rejoice forever in the mansions of heaven.[13]

On the same day, the memory of the holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Methodius, Archbishop of Moravia (for his life see May 1).

On the same day, the memory of one hundred and twenty martyrs in Persia, who in the fourth century were burned by King Sapor.

On the same day, the memory of the holy martyrs Jeremiah and Archilius the priest.

12. Nisibis was located in Mesopotamia and lay along the course of the river Mygdonius.
13. The repose of the Venerable Platonida took place around 308.

* * *

ALSO COMMEMORATED THIS DAY

On the same day, 120 martyrs in Persia, who in the 4th century were burned by King Sapor.

On the same day, the memory of the holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Methodius.

NOTES

2444. Deaconesses (I serve, I minister) in the early Christian Church were women who oversaw order in the church during divine services and assisted the bishops in administering the sacrament of baptism to women. The duties of deaconesses consisted of the following: they prepared women for baptism, teaching them how and what they should answer the questions of the one baptizing, and how they should conduct themselves after baptism; they assisted the bishop at the baptism of women; they oversaw order in the women's part of the church (ancient churches were divided into two halves separated from one another, one of which was intended for men and the other for women), and also watched the door through which women entered the church, not admitting unworthy persons there; they were present at the conversations of bishops or presbyters with women, and so forth. Deaconesses were counted among the clergy and therefore were installed in their office through a special ordination. Those chosen as deaconesses were ordinarily women of honest, holy life – usually virgins or widows, and moreover not younger than forty years of age.

THE SEVENTH DAY OF APRIL

April 7

7 апреля

New Calendar April 7 · Old Calendar April 20 (civil dates)

Memory of Our Venerable Father George the Confessor, Metropolitan of Mytilene

Память преподобного отца нашего Георгия Исповедника, митрополита Митиленского

Having loved Christ from his youth, our Venerable Father George became a monk, lived a life of ascetic virtue, and, as no other, grew perfect in humility. In the reign of Leo the Isaurian[1] he became a confessor for Christ, suffering persecution and oppression from the iconoclasts. Then, in the reign of the Orthodox Constantine and Irene[2448], he was raised to the episcopal see in the city of Mytilene[2], metropolis of the island of Lesbos[3]. St. George was exceedingly merciful, feeding the hungry with generous alms. For his great abstinence he became a friend of the Angels, and by casting out unclean spirits and healing incurable ailments he showed himself a wonderworker. Having lived until the reign of the Emperor Leo the Armenian, who renewed iconoclasm[4], he again, now a deep old man, suffered persecution for the holy icons. Even before the reign of the Emperor Leo the Armenian,

1. Leo the Isaurian reigned from 717 to 741. He came from the class of well-to-do peasants and distinguished himself so much by his military service under Justinian II that in 717, with general approval, he was raised to the imperial throne. Turning his attention to ecclesiastical affairs and, among other things, to the superstition of image-veneration, he resolved to abolish the latter by police measures. At first (in 726) he issued an edict only against the veneration of icons, for which he commanded that they be placed higher in the churches, so that the people might not kiss them. In 730 an edict was issued commanding that the icons be removed from the churches. Leo the Isaurian succeeded in having the icons temporarily withdrawn from ecclesiastical use.
2. Mitylene, a city on the island of Lesbos (the largest in the Aegean Sea), near ancient Troy and Mysia (Asia Minor), has up to 36,000 inhabitants; the island is mountainous, fertile, rich in timber, grain and wine. It was annexed to Turkey in 1462, under Mehmed.
3. In antiquity the cities of this island, Crezos, Pyrra and Mitylene, flourished especially.
4. Leo the Armenian reigned from 813 to 820.

the renewal of iconoclasm and the exile of St. George, there were in Mytilene certain signs foretelling the swift appearance of troubles and calamities in the Church of Christ. Once, in the church of the holy Great Martyr Theodora, which is near the quay, during Vespers, while the people sang "Kyrie eleison" – Lord, have mercy – the holy cross standing upon the Holy Table was suddenly and with a loud noise taken from its place by some invisible force and lifted up to the ceiling, and then, bending its upper end downward, fell to the ground. The people who saw this were seized with great fear and terror; raising their eyes and hands, all cried out aloud for a long time, "Kyrie eleison," and they did not wish to leave the church, for they expected that some sudden destruction would visit the island of Lesbos. At that time the Venerable Symeon was in the church together with his younger brother George, who afterward in his time succeeded to the throne of the first George[5]. Symeon, being a seer, spoke to the people with tears:

"Brethren, it will not be as you expect. God will not utterly destroy this land, but within a few days there will ascend the throne a God-hating and God-opposing emperor, who, overthrowing the holy icons to the ground, will take from the Church its beauty."

After a few days had passed, a huge and frightful boar entered the church and the sanctuary – the church door, by chance, had not been locked – its ears and tail cut off, and lay down here in the high place. Noticing this, the church guards at once began to drive the boar away, but without success, for it was fierce and rushed at all who tried to drive it from the sanctuary, putting them to flight. After this they brought a great stake and beat the animal until it bled for a long time,

5. In the city of Mitylene, on the island of Lesbos, there were two metropolitans named George. The first of them, whose Life is here written, suffered exile in the reign of Leo the Armenian in 816; the second George was the brother of Symeon the Seer. He was ordained presbyter by the first George in the reign of Constantine and Irene (in 762), and he ascended the throne in the reign of the Emperor Michael the Stammerer (820–829), who on his accession granted freedom to the Orthodox. This second George was exiled for Orthodoxy by the iconoclast Emperor Theophilus (829–848); after the death of Theophilus, the blessed Empress Theodora (842–865), together with the Most Holy Patriarch Methodius of Constantinople, confirmed Orthodoxy, and in 842 she recalled the second George from exile. After a God-pleasing life he peacefully reposed on his throne.

and, exhausted, they could with difficulty drive it out. Learning of this, the same blessed Symeon said:

"Children, believe that this boar signifies a bishop who, by God's permission, will be here, and who in life and manner will be like a swine."

All this soon came to pass. The aforementioned Emperor Leo the Armenian, having ascended the imperial throne, undertook persecution against the Church of God, and at the same time summoned many bishops to Constantinople, inclining them to accept the iconoclastic heresy. Our Venerable Father George, Metropolitan of Mytilene, being also summoned with the other bishops, showed himself a fearless warrior of Christ. While many approved the emperor's unorthodoxy, he, by his true wisdom, put to shame the emperor, the false patriarch Theodotus, surnamed Cassiteras[6], and the other heretics of one mind with them, and some of them he brought to a consciousness of their own error.

The emperor and the patriarch, not bearing his rebukes, sent him into exile in Cherson[7], and in his place they set over Mytilene as metropolitan a certain heretic, who, like a wild boar in a meadow, laid waste and defiled the vineyard of Christ: he trampled the holy icons, senselessly confusing the rational sheep. But St. George, having spent the remaining days of his life in exile, by the grace of Christ performed many miracles. At the time of his repose a most bright star shone in the heavens, the herald of his blessed end, which was visible also on Lesbos. By this star the rational sheep in Mytilene knew that their shepherd, St. George, had departed to the Lord.

The life of the saint, by his good deeds, was a light to the world. And God glorified his blessed end with a bright star, and after his death, to glorify His servant, He caused wondrous healing springs to flow from his relics.

* * *

6. Theodotus I Cassiteras governed the patriarchate from 815 to 821.

7. Cherson, or Korsun, a Greek colony and the most important of the cities of Chersonesus Taurica, near present-day Sevastopol, is the place where Great Prince Vladimir was baptized.

Passion of the Holy Martyr Calliopius

Страдание святого мученика Каллиопия

In Pergē of Pamphylia[8] there lived a pious and God-fearing woman, Theoclia; both she and her household were imbued with the fear of God. Living a virtuous life, Theoclia distributed generous alms. Being married to an honorable man of senatorial and patrician family[9], Theoclia for many years bore no children. Having through diligent prayers obtained from God relief from her barrenness, she conceived after a long time from her marriage. At this time her husband died, leaving her heiress of a great fortune. Having given birth to a son, she named him Calliopius[10]. In teaching him the sciences, Theoclia chiefly strove to instill in him the fear of God and to teach him the wisdom of Divine Scripture. In those times the service of idols was widely spread, the truth was hidden by lies, and most people worshipped and offered sacrifices to foul idols. The constant companions of the life of St. Calliopius were prayer and fasting. When the judge was informed about the holy youth, that he was a Christian, his mother, the blessed Theoclia, provided her son with a sufficient amount of money and clothing, and sent with him some servants, dispatching him by ship to another country to escape unjust condemnation. Thus the blessed Calliopius sailed to Pompeiopolis in Cilicia[11]. Seeing here that the impious commander Maximus was arranging sacrifices, singing and dancing in honor of foul idols, the holy youth marveled and asked someone: "What is the cause of such rejoicing among you?"

8. *Pamphylia*: in antiquity, a part of the coast of Asia Minor, bounded by Lycia and Cilicia and extending along the Pamphylian Sea (now the Gulf of Adalia). Sharing the historical fate of all Asia Minor, Pamphylia was successively under Persian, Macedonian and Syrian rule, then was incorporated into the Persian kingdom, and in 120 B.C. became a Roman province. The population, a mixture of natives with newcomers from Cilicia and Greece, resembled the Cilicians in manners and customs and engaged extensively in piracy at sea. The principal cities of this mountainous country, filled with the system of the Taurus, were: Attaleia (Adalia), Side, (Eski-Adalia), Cibyra, Aspendus, Perge, Soli.

9. Patricians in Rome were persons of noble origin; a senator was an official holding the highest public office in the state.

10. Calliopius is a Greek word, meaning in Russian "comely," "with a good countenance."

11. Cilicia: a province of Asia Minor.

"Today is a feast in honor of our gods," they answered him. "Come, you too, and join our feast."

"I am a Christian," said the saint, "and I keep the feasts of my Christ in fasting, and it is not fitting that lips which glorify Christ should partake of the defiled sacrifices of impious gods."

These words of the saint reached the ears of the military commander Maximus, and the latter, burning with anger, ordered the holy youth seized and brought before him for interrogation.

"What is your name?" the commander asked St. Calliopius when he was brought to judgment.

"I am a Christian," the saint answered, "and my name is Calliopius."

"Now, when the whole universe," said the commander, "is holding a feast on the occasion of the festival of the gods, why do you alone, not wishing to share the feast with us, remain in some delusion?"

"It is you," St. Calliopius answered, "who are those who walk in darkness and deception, for you have forsaken the living God, the Creator of heaven and earth, who made all things by His word, and you worship the work of human hands – an insensible tree and a cracked stone."

"Your youth makes you bold," the commander objected, "exposing yourself to the danger of enduring no few torments! Tell us, from what country are you and of what family?"

"I am from Pergē of Pamphylia," the saint answered, "of senatorial and patrician family, but most of all and most honorable for me is that I am a Christian."

"Do you have parents?" the commander asked.

"Yes, I have a mother," the saint answered, "and my father died long ago."

"I swear by the great sun and all the deities," the commander answered, "that if you bow to the gods, I will give in marriage to you my only daughter."

"If I wished to marry," the saint answered, "I could take your daughter as my wife and bring her into possession of my mother's estate. But know that I have promised my God Christ, who created me after His image, to keep this mortal body in pure virginity and to

present it spotless before His righteous judgment. Do as you wish, but I am a Christian."

"Vile and wicked one," cried the commander, "you surely think by these words to rouse my fury, so that I may kill you the sooner? Know, then, that I will torment you for a long time, tearing your body to pieces, and the remainder of it I will give to the fire for burning."

"The longer my torments," the saint answered, "the brighter the crown Christ will weave for me for my sufferings. For the Scripture also says that no one will be crowned unless he is tortured according to the law (2 Tim. 2:5)."

"Stretch him out," the commander said to the executioners, "and with tin rods break all his bones!"

During the beating St. Calliopius said: "I thank Thee, Christ, that Thou hast granted me to suffer torments for the glorification of Thy name."

"Offer sacrifice to the gods," the commander continued, "so that you may see your fatherland again and not lose your property. See how cruelly you are being tormented!"

"I contemplate the sweetness of the future rest promised me by Christ, and I feel no torment," said the saint. "And although at present I am in a foreign land, I nevertheless know that 'the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof' (Ps. 23:1). And here I see my mother and my fatherland. My mother is the Orthodox Church of Christ, and my fatherland is the heavenly Jerusalem, according to the word of the Apostle: 'For our citizenship is in heaven' (Phil. 3:20). But if you remind me of my fleshly mother, there is the Divine voice affirming: 'He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me' (Mt. 10:37). I count the abundance of riches as nothing, and I consider it better to suffer with the crucified Christ than to have, through sin, the brief satisfaction of the mad world."

"Since he is already laid down," said the commander to the servants, "turn him over and beat him on the belly with raw sinews, saying: Impious one, do not answer neither this nor that, but answer the question!"

"Mad man, deprived of heavenly blessings and fiercer than a beast!" said the holy martyr to the commander. "I speak to you the words of truth, but you, having blinded spiritual eyes and closed ears so as not to hear the words of the Lord, unjustly subject me to torments, slaying me as a robber!"

"Set up," the commander then ordered the executioners, "the torture wheel with sharp iron points, and kindle a strong fire beneath it, and stretch Calliopius tightly upon the wheel, even to the dislocation of his joints; in such a state bind him to the wheel and turn it, so that he may perish, cut by iron and burned by fire."

When the holy youth began to be tormented in this manner, he, in grievous sufferings, cried out to the Lord, saying: "Come, my Christ, to the help of Thy servant, that Thy holy name may be glorified through me before my end, and that all may know that those who hope in Thee shall never be put to shame." And immediately the Angel of the Lord appeared, quenched the fire, stopped the wheel and made it immovable, so that the executioners could not turn it. The young body of the martyr was bathed in blood upon the wheel, and through the deep wounds the bones were visible, for the wheel had on it two-edged, saw-like blades. The commander ordered the martyr to be unbound and taken down from the wheel. The sight of his sufferings moved all who beheld it, and the people cried out, saying: "O unjust judge! And what a youth is cruelly perishing!"

"Did I not tell you," said the commander to the saint, "that your youth makes you bold, and thereby subjects you to cruel torments?"

"Shameless dog," answered the saint, "do you think I am frightened by your tortures?"

"You, accursed one," remarked the commander, "insult me, so that I may destroy you the sooner, but that will not be! Therefore come forward and offer sacrifice to the gods, to avoid even more cruel torments!"

"I trust," answered the holy martyr, "in my Christ, and you are not able to defile in me the confession of God. My body is given over to you: torment it as you will; you will receive for this vengeance from God on

the day of the Last Judgment, 'for... with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again' (Mt. 7:2)."

"Binding him in iron chains," the commander ordered the executioners concerning the holy Calliopius, "keep him in the inner dungeon, take no care for him, and do not allow any of the Christians close to him to enter to him, lest anyone praise him for his endurance." The executioners at once bound the holy sufferer and cast him into the inner dungeon.

The blessed Theoclia, learning of the suffering for Christ of her only son, the holy Calliopius, wrote a will concerning her house and all her property: she freed her slaves, two hundred and fifty in number, and distributed to the poor all the gold and silver and precious garments she had. All the rest of her property and immovable estates, villages, fields and vineyards she gave to the most holy Church; and, leaving her fatherland, she set out for Cilicia to her son who was suffering for Christ. Having paid money to the prison guards, she entered the inner dungeon and, seeing her son, fell down, bowed to him, and wiped the pus from his sores. Holy Calliopius, however, being entirely bound in iron and swollen from countless wounds, could not rise before his mother, and only said:

"Well have you done in coming, my mother, and witness of my sufferings for Christ!"

Theoclia, seeing the body of her son torn by wounds, said to him:

"Blessed and blessed is the fruit of my womb, for I have presented you, as Anna presented Samuel, as a vessel consecrated to God, and as Sarah offered Isaac, I have offered you to Christ as an acceptable sacrifice!"

All that night the mother remained in the dungeon, sitting at the feet of her son, singing and glorifying God together with him. At midnight a bright light shone in the dungeon, and a voice was heard, crying out:

"You are the holy confessors of Christ, destroyers of idols, who have left fatherland and property to suffer with Christ!"

At the coming of morning, the commander Maximus, seating himself on the judgment seat, brought the holy martyr Calliopius out of the dungeon for interrogation. Setting him before himself, he asked:

"Have you abandoned your madness, and do you consent, to preserve your life, to fulfill the imperial command and bow down to the gods? Or, on the contrary, do you wish to perish humbly, like your teacher Christ?"

"I marvel," answered the saint, "at your impudence! You have many times heard from me one and the same answer: I am a Christian and will die for Christ; and now again you ask me the same thing, and you are not ashamed to take up arms against the truth. I ardently desire to suffer like my Teacher Christ, and I strive to die for Him without reservation!"

Having heard this, and understanding the unbending resolve of the martyr, and being convinced of his unshakable firmness of soul, the commander ordered him to be crucified like Christ on the cross. It was then Great Thursday, when the commemoration of the holy Mystical Supper of Christ is celebrated. The holy Theoclia, seeing her son being led away, gave the soldiers five gold coins, begging them to crucify Calliopius not as Christ but head downward. She did this out of humility, considering it an unworthy thing that her son should in the form of his crucifixion be made like his Lord Christ. Thus holy Calliopius was crucified for Christ head downward, on the Thursday of the saving supper. And on Great Friday, at the third hour of the day, he yielded up his spirit into the hands of God, a Divine voice descending to him from heaven: "Enter, fellow-citizen of Christ and co-heir of the saints."[12]

When the dead body of the holy Calliopius had been taken down from the cross, his blessed mother, glorifying Christ, embraced her son's neck, and then immediately gave up her own soul. Brethren Christians, coming, took the bodies of both and buried them in an honorable place in one grave, glorifying the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

12. The holy martyr Calliopius reposed on 7 April 304, on a Friday, in the Cilician city of Pompeiopolis (in Asia Minor).

On the same day the memory of the holy Deacon Rufinus, and the holy Martyr Acilina, and with them two hundred soldiers, who died in Sinope about the year 310.

On the same day the memory of our Venerable Father Daniel of Pereslavl.

* * *

ALSO COMMEMORATED THIS DAY

On the same day the memory of the holy Deacon Rufinus, and the holy Martyr Acilina, and with them 200 soldiers, who died in Sinope about the year 310.

On the same day the memory of our Venerable Father Daniel of Pereslavl.

NOTES

2448. Emperor Constantine V Copronymus (741–775) persecuted image-veneration with even greater cruelty than his father Leo the Isaurian. He wished solemnly to abolish image-veneration as a heresy, and for this purpose in 754 he convened at Constantinople a council which is called ecumenical. There were 338 bishops at it, but not one patriarch. Here it was decreed that image-veneration was idolatry, and that the sole image of Christ the Savior is the Eucharist. The council anathematized all the defenders of image-veneration and those who venerated images, especially St. John of Damascus. St. Irene governed from 780 to 790 and from 797 to 802 during the minority of her son Constantine Porphyrogenitus. She declared herself for image-veneration. In 787 Irene convened at Nicaea the second Nicene and seventh Ecumenical Council, under the presidency of the Patriarch of Constantinople Tarasius. At the council, which consisted of 367 Fathers, image-veneration was re-established.

THE EIGHTH DAY OF APRIL

April 8

8 апреля

New Calendar April 8 · Old Calendar April 21 (civil dates)

Life of Our Venerable Father Nifont, Bishop of Novgorod

Житие преподобного отца нашего Нифонта, епископа Новгородского

The Blessed Nifont was a monk of the Holy Monastery of the Caves in the time when the abbot Timothy[1] governed that monastery.

Living in the monastery, St. Nifont advanced in prayer, fasting and all the other virtues, striving to imitate in all things the lives of the great saints of God.

When the Blessed John, Bishop of Novgorod, after twenty years of labor in the governance of his flock, grew weak in strength, laid down the episcopal throne and withdrew to a monastery[2], then this Blessed Nifont, who had already shone forth with the rays of his virtues in every land, was by the will of God chosen by all to the episcopal throne of Novgorod, and was ordained bishop at Kiev[3] by Metropolitan Michael[4].

Having ascended the throne, set as a lamp upon a candlestick, St. Nifont shone yet more brightly through his zealous care for the good order of the Orthodox Church. He labored to multiply the glory of God and was zealous for the well-being, both temporal and eternal, of his rational sheep. Concerned to multiply the glory of God, the Venerable Father, by his zeal, laid in the midst of Novgorod the foundation of a stone church in honor of the Most Holy Theotokos, which with God's

1. Timothy was abbot of the Monastery of the Caves from 1124; he reposed in 1131.
2. John governed the Novgorod eparchy from 1110 to 1130.
3. The ordination of Nifont belongs to the same year, 1130.
4. Metropolitan Michael, a Greek, governed the Kievan metropolia from 1130 to 1145.

help he soon completed; besides this, he adorned with icon-painting the cathedral church of Novgorod dedicated to St. Sophia, and covered its roof with tin[5]. Concerned for the well-being of his flock's earthly life, this archpastor was distinguished, for example, by such virtues: if any strife arose among the Orthodox, he strove in every way to reconcile them. Thus, when the Venerable Father once learned that the men of Kiev and Chernigov, having gathered many warriors and come to Novgorod, intended to make war upon it, he at once took with him the Novgorod nobles, went to those who had armed themselves for battle, and with God's help compelled them to lay down their weapons[6]. In like manner, in other cases too, the Venerable Father cared for the peaceful life of God's people, being zealous for the well-being of their temporal life.

But the Venerable Father cared still more for the eternal life of his rational sheep. Remembering the words of the Lord, spoken of God the Father, that His commandment is "eternal life" (Jn. 17:2), the Venerable Nifont always taught the Orthodox not to depart from the law of God and the Church tradition, lest they lose eternal life; and those who departed from the law of God and committed sins, the Venerable Father rebuked, foretelling destruction to such people for their sins, preaching "in season and out of season, reproving, rebuking, exhorting, with all long-suffering and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2), in accordance with the Apostle's command.

This great zeal of the archpastor for the salvation of the souls of his children is seen from the following circumstance. After the Novgorodians had expelled their prince Vsevolod Mstislavich[7], Svyatoslav Olgovich, who had married contrary to the canons of the Church, came to reign over them at their invitation. Then this blessed archpastor not only refused to crown that prince, but also forbade all his clergy to wit-

5. The Novgorodians highly valued the care of Bishop Nifont for the churches of God. "Each of us knows of this," says the Novgorod chronicler: "Which of the bishops has so adorned St. Sophia? He painted the vestibules, set up the iconostasis, and coated the outside with lime and lead. In Pskov he built the stone church of the Holy Savior on the Zavelichye side, and in Ladoga that of St. Clement." IV Novgorod Chronicle.

6. This event took place in 1135.

7. In 1132.

ness that lawless wedding (the prince was married by the priests who had come with him). The Venerable Nifont[2467] boldly rebuked that prince for his transgression, emulating the psalmist who said: "I will speak of Thy revelations before kings, and will not be ashamed" (Ps. 118:46).

The zeal of this archpastor was also great when he sought to preserve the Russian Church herself from transgression, which happened in the following circumstances.

When Metropolitan Michael II of Kiev, from whom St. Nifont had received ordination as bishop, passed away, the Grand Prince of Kiev, Izyaslav Mstislavich[8], chose in his place Clement the Philosopher, who was then a monk and had taken the schema. Unwilling to send Clement to Constantinople for ordination as bishop because of the distance, that prince gathered for this purpose a council of Russian bishops. At this council were present: Onuphrius of Chernigov, Theodore of Belgorod, Euthymius of Pereyaslavl, Damian of Yuryev, Theodore of Vladimir, St. Nifont of Novgorod, Manuel of Smolensk, Joachim of Turov, Kozma of Polotsk. When the council began its sessions, the Blessed Nifont spoke at length, saying that Russian bishops could in no case elect a metropolitan for themselves without the blessing of the Patriarch of Constantinople; he boldly declared before the whole council that this was contrary to the tradition of the holy Orthodox Eastern Church, which had been enlightened by holy baptism from the throne of Constantinople, which had thus made us sons of God, sons of the East, which had visited us from on high; and the first Metropolitan of Kiev, Michael, had been appointed from there (from Constantinople); from then on it had been the constant rule for the Metropolitan of Kiev to receive the blessing for his appointment from the Patriarch of Constantinople.

Speaking thus, the Venerable Nifont boldly exhorted the sons of Russia not to turn away by their opposition from adoption to the East, and thereby to God, for, he said, "the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6).

8. Izyaslav Mstislavich was Grand Prince of Kiev from 1146 to 1154.

The opinion of the Venerable Nifont was shared by five other bishops: Kozma of Polotsk, Joachim of Turov, Manuel of Smolensk, Euthymius of Pereyaslavl, Theodore of Belgorod. But the prince, out of pride, not wishing to abandon his intention, did not heed the Blessed Nifont, but did what he had planned, being supported by the other bishops. Thus, by the prince's command and on the counsel of Onuphrius, Bishop of Chernigov, Clement, instead of receiving the blessing of the Patriarch of Constantinople, was consecrated bishop by the head among the relics of St. Clement, Pope of Rome (this head had been brought from Cherson by St. Vladimir, who had received it as a gift from the Bishop of Cherson after receiving holy baptism); after this Clement unlawfully took his seat on the episcopal throne of the Metropolis of Kiev.

Clement demanded that the Blessed Nifont serve the Divine Liturgy together with him, but this zealot of Orthodoxy said to him:

"Since you have not received the blessing of the Patriarch of Constantinople, I neither approved your ordination before, nor do I approve it now, and for this reason I cannot serve together with you."

Angered at St. Nifont for this, Clement incited Prince Izyaslav and the bishops obedient to him to send the Venerable Father into confinement. For this reason Prince Izyaslav did not admit the Blessed Nifont to the episcopal throne in Novgorod, but commanded him to remain the whole time in the Monastery of the Caves, as if in a place of confinement. The Venerable Father, however, remained there with great joy, praising and thanking God that He had granted him to return to his former silent life together with the saints.

When, however, the Christ-loving Tsar Georgy Monomakhovich[9] defeated Izyaslav Mstislavich and took into his hands the reign in Kiev, then he with great honor restored the Blessed Nifont to the episcopal throne of Novgorod. The Novgorodians, who until then had been as if troubled and forsaken, like sheep without a shepherd, received the Blessed Nifont with great joy. At the same time the Patriarch of Constantinople, hearing how great a courage the Venerable Father had shown in contending for the traditions of the fathers, sent to St. Nifont

9. That is, Yuri Vladimirovich Dolgorukiy, son of Vladimir Monomakh. This was in 1150.

an epistle in which he praised him for his wisdom and courage and likened him to the ancient holy fathers who had stood firmly for Orthodoxy[10]. The Venerable Father, having read the patriarchal letter, was kindled with still greater zeal for Orthodoxy. Besides this, the Venerable Father was not left without a worthy recompense for his labors from the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, as the history of his blessed repose shows, of which our account will now speak.

Some time after St. Nifont returned to his episcopal throne, he heard that from Constantinople Metropolitan Constantine[11] was coming to Russia, sent by the Patriarch of Constantinople to Russia with the aim of deposing the Metropolitan of Kiev, Clement, and taking his place. Learning of this, the Venerable Father rejoiced greatly for two reasons: first, he hoped to receive the blessing from the hierarch, and second, he hoped to venerate the Most Holy Theotokos and the other saints in the Monastery of the Caves. For this purpose he set out for Kiev and there awaited the arrival of Metropolitan Constantine, who had already left Constantinople. Dwelling in the Monastery of the Caves, the Venerable Father showed great love for the Most Holy Theotokos and for the other saints. Soon the Venerable Father fell here into a grievous illness, which preceded his honorable repose. Three days before his illness the Venerable Father had a wondrous vision, which he related to the brethren.

"When I came," he said, "after the morning chanting, to my cell, I felt the need to sleep a little. Soon I fell into a light sleep: and behold, it seemed to me that I was in this holy Monastery of the Caves, at the place of Nicholas Svyatosha; there I prayed much and fervently to the Most Holy Theotokos, asking Her to show me the Venerable Theodosius, the good builder, who even after his death had cared for the increase of virtue in his monastery. Meanwhile the brethren were gathering in the church; one of them, approaching me, said:

"Do you wish to see our Venerable Father Theodosius?"

10. One of the patriarchal letters to Nifont is printed in the Life of Nifont in the *Monuments of Russian Literature* of Kushelev-Bezborodko, IV, 5, and in the *History of the Russian Church* of Bishop Jamarie, vol. 3, ed. 2, p. 297.

11. Metropolitan Constantine, a Greek, did not live long in Rus'; he governed the metropolia from 1156 to 1158 and died in 1159 at Chernigov.

And I answered:

"Yes, I wish it, and if it is possible, show him to me."

Then, taking me by the hand, he led me into the sanctuary, and there showed me St. Theodosius. Seeing the saint, I went up to him joyfully, fell at his feet, and bowed down to the ground. He raised me up, blessed me, and said:

"Well hast thou done, brother and son Nifont, in coming here; henceforth thou shalt abide with us without ever parting."

St. Theodosius held in his hand a scroll, which I had asked of him; taking the scroll, I unrolled it and read. The scroll began with these words: "Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me" (Is. 8:18). After the vision had ended, the Blessed Nifont related, I came to myself and understood that my sickness was a visitation to me from God.

Having been ill for thirteen days, the Venerable One reposed in peace in the Lord on the 20th day of the month of April, on the Saturday of Bright Week. His body was laid with honor in the cave of the Venerable Theodosius, while his spirit stands with that most renowned Venerable One before the throne of the Lord Christ, enjoying the ineffable heavenly blessings. May these saints pray also for us, their children. To God, glorified in the undivided Trinity, to the Father together with the Son and the Holy Spirit, belong all glory, honor, and worship, now and always and unto ages of ages. Amen.

* * *

Commemoration of our Holy Father Celestine, Pope of Rome

Память во святых отца нашего Келестина, папы Римского

This Venerable One was Bishop of the city of Rome under the Emperor Theodosius the Younger.[12] He was distinguished for high perfection in life and in word, and therefore he was deemed worthy of election to the episcopal see of Rome after the death of Pope Zosimus, and after him the Blessed Boniface, successor of Innocent the

12. Theodosius II the Younger reigned from 408 to 450.

Great.[13] Speaking and acting in everything in accordance with the Apostolic Tradition, Celestine by his epistles overthrew the impious Nestorius, in which he was assisted also by the Blessed Cyril.[14] Having composed many other words of instruction worthy of remembrance, he peacefully reposed, passing over into the eternal blessed life, and he triumphs in the company of the Apostles and Fathers.[15]

* * *

Passion of the Holy Martyr Pausilippus

Страдание святого мученика Павсилипа

The Holy Martyr Pausilippus suffered under the Emperor Hadrian,[16] at the time when Lucius was prefect governing the province of Eutropius.[17] First the saint was brought before the emperor and declared himself a Christian, for which he was beaten with iron clubs. After this he was handed over for judgment to the prefect Pretius, who for a long time tried to persuade him to offer sacrifice to the idols, and, failing in this, ordered him to be placed in fetters and beheaded with the sword. When the holy martyr was being led to execution, he broke his fetters and fled from the guards. Pursued by them, he prayed that the Lord would receive his spirit. And it came to pass through the saint's prayer: during his flight he expired. Then Christians came, and with honor, singing psalms and sacred hymns, solemnly buried his holy body.

* * *

13. Here there is evidently an error. Pope Innocent I occupied the Roman episcopal see from 402 to 417, and he was followed by: Zosimus, 417–418; Boniface I, 418–422; and Celestine, 422–432.

14. In 430, after the local Roman council that condemned Nestorius, Celestine wrote to Cyril, Archbishop of Alexandria, a letter stating that if Nestorius did not, within ten days of receiving this letter, acknowledge the faith held at Rome and Alexandria, he would be deposed and excommunicated. At the same time, Celestine sent letters to the Church of Constantinople and to Archbishop John of Antioch, in which he denounced the error of Nestorius and announced the condemnation that would be pronounced if Nestorius persisted. To Cyril, Celestine entrusted the execution of this sentence, as the authorized representative of the Roman bishop.

15. The repose of Venerable Celestine followed in 432.

16. Emperor Hadrian reigned from 117 to 138.

17. Here the prefect of Eutropia is wrongly named in place of the prefect of Europe. The province of Europe was located in Thrace, in the northeastern part of the Balkan Peninsula.

Commemoration of the Holy Apostles Herodion, Agabus, Rufus, Asyncritus, Phlegon, and Hermes

Память святых Апостолов Иродиона, Агава, Руфа, Асинкрита, Флегонта и Ермия

The Holy Apostle Herodion,[18] a kinsman according to the flesh of the Holy Apostle Paul, came from the Cilician city of Tarsus.[19] He was a companion and fellow-laborer of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and was ordained by them as bishop of the city of Patara.[20] In the episcopal rank, the Holy Herodion zealously spread the Christian teaching among the Hellenic pagans. Since the Holy Herodion converted many of the pagans to Christ, the Jews, out of envy toward this servant of God, conspiring with the Hellene idolaters, seized the saint by force and subjected him to many kinds of torments; in this, some of the tormentors mercilessly beat the saint, others threw stones at him, and still others struck his head with clubs. One of the tormentors struck the saint with a knife so forcefully that he fell lifeless; thinking the saint dead, the tormentors left him. But by the grace of God the Holy Apostle remained alive, and afterward labored much at Rome, preaching the word of God together with the Holy First-Chief Apostle Peter. The Holy Apostle Paul, sending an epistle to the Romans from Corinth,[21] greets in this epistle also Herodion, who was then at Rome together with the Holy Apostle Peter: "Salute Herodion, my kinsman" (Rom. 16:11). When the Holy Apostle Peter was crucified, then the Holy Herodion, as Metaphrastes testifies, together with the Holy Olympas[22] and many other believers, was beheaded with the sword.[23]

18. Holy Apostle Herodion, like the other five Apostles commemorated today, belongs to the number of the Seventy Apostles. The memory of all Seventy Apostles is celebrated by the Holy Church on 4 January.

19. Tarsus was a large city in antiquity, located in the Asia Minor region of Cilicia. Remains of this city survive to this day.

20. Patara, now Patras, is a large trading city in the Kingdom of Greece, on the shore of the Gulf of Patras.

21. Corinth was a city of ancient Greece famous in antiquity, lying in the southeastern corner of the Gulf of Corinth between the Ionian and Aegean Seas. At present, on the site of ancient Corinth there exists the small town of Kuronto with 5,000 inhabitants. The Epistle to the Romans was written by the Apostle Paul from Corinth in 58 A.D.

22. Holy Olympas, or Olympicus, was one of the Seventy Apostles. His memory is on 4 January.

23. The repose of the Holy Apostle Herodion followed about 67 A.D.

The Holy Apostle Agabus was endowed with the gift of prophecy. He is mentioned in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. There it is said of him that when the prophets gathered from Jerusalem in Antioch, "one of them, named Agabus, stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world, which came to pass under Caesar Claudius" (Acts 11:27–28). In Caesarea[24] the Holy Agabus foretold to the Apostle Paul the sufferings that awaited him in Jerusalem: "...he took Paul's girdle, and binding his own hands and feet, said: thus says the Holy Spirit: the man whose girdle this is, so shall the Jews bind in Jerusalem and deliver into the hands of the Gentiles" (Acts 21:11). The Holy Apostle Agabus preached Christ in various lands and converted many of the pagans to the Christian faith.

The Holy Apostle Rufus, whom the Apostle Paul greets in his epistle to the Romans with these words: "Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord" (Rom. 16:13), was bishop of the city of Thebes[25] in Greece.

The Holy Apostle Asyncritus, mentioned in the same epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans (Rom. 16:14), was bishop in Hyrcania, a region of Asia Minor.

The Holy Apostles Phlegon and Hermes,[26] mentioned in the same epistle, were bishops: the first in the Thracian city of Marathon, and the second in Dalmatia.[27]

All these Apostles mentioned above, of the seventy, labored much, preaching the Gospel of Christ throughout the whole world and bringing many pagans to Christ. At various times almost all of them were subjected to various torments, both by the Jews and by the Hellenes, and, receiving the crown of martyrdom, departed glorified to the Lord.

Kontakion, Tone 2:

24. Caesarea in Palestine was a city on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, built by the Jewish king Herod on the site of the ancient city of Strato and named in honor of Caesar Augustus.

25. Thebes was the chief city of the Greek region of Boeotia.

26. The Holy Apostle of the Seventy named Hermas, who was bishop in the Thracian city of Philippopolis, is commemorated today. The memory of this last is celebrated by the Holy Church on 4 January.

27. Dalmatia was the southern part of Illyria, bordering on Pannonia to the north, on Italy to the west, and on the Adriatic Sea.

Ye have been made manifest as disciples of Christ and most venerable Apostles: glorious Herodion, Agabus and Rufus, Asyncritus, Phlegon with Hermas: ever pray ye to the Lord to grant forgiveness of transgressions to us who sing your praises.

* * *

NOTES

2467. St. Nifont was an expert in the canonical or church rules and a zealous, self-sacrificing guardian of them. This zeal for the observance of church rules is seen not only from St. Nifont's attitude toward the non-canonical marriage of Sviatoslav Olgovich, but also from the further account of Nifont's relation to Metropolitan Clement Smoliatich of Kiev, who occupied the metropolitan throne without the blessing of the Patriarch of Constantinople. Other bishops and various persons turned to St. Nifont for the resolution of perplexing canonical questions and of various cases of church life. From the "Inquiry of Kirik," or the collection of answers received by the hieromonk and domestic (chief of the choristers) of the Novgorod Antoniev Monastery, Kirik, from various persons to whom he addressed his questions, chiefly from three Novgorod bishops: St. Nifont, Elijah (1165–1185), and an unidentified eparchy bishop Sabbas, we learn that a certain Klim, on the commission of the Bishop of Polotsk, also applied to Nifont. Kirik's questions were addressed mainly to the Novgorod bishop Nifont, who gave sound and practical answers for the resolution of perplexities. The "Inquiry of Kirik" is printed in the *Russian Historical Library*, published by the Archeographical Commission, vol. 6, art. 21 ff., by Pavlov, and earlier in the *Monuments of Russian Literature of the 12th Century*, p. 173 ff., by Kalaidovich.

THE NINTH DAY OF APRIL

April 9

9 апреля

New Calendar April 9 · Old Calendar April 22 (civil dates)

Suffering of the Holy Martyr Eupsychius

Страдание святого мученика Евпсихия

The holy Martyr Eupsychius was the son of noble parents. He was born and brought up in Caesarea in Cappadocia[1], and spent the years of his youth blamelessly, in Christian chastity, having wisdom in place of gray hairs and an undefiled life in place of old age (see: Wis. 4:9).

In the reign of the God-opposing Julian the Apostate[2], he entered into lawful marriage and, while the wedding festivities had not yet ended, displayed great zeal and love for Christ Jesus.

In the city of Caesarea there was a temple of an unclean idol called Tyche, which means fortune, or happiness. This temple was greatly revered, and whenever Emperor Julian was in Caesarea, he offered his impious sacrifices there each day. It so happened that the celebration of Eupsychius' marriage coincided with an impious feast of idols. Seeing the pagans going to the temple to offer sacrifices, St. Eupsychius was inflamed with zeal for the Lord. Taking a multitude of Christians with him, he went and shattered the idols and razed the idol temple to its foundations. The pagans immediately reported this to Emperor Julian, while St. Eupsychius, mindful of the sufferings that awaited him for this deed, distributed his possessions to the poor and prepared himself for the contest of martyrdom, abiding in fasting and prayer. Emperor Julian, hearing that the temple of his gods had been destroyed, was

1. The name Caesarea was borne by several cities. Caesarea in Cappadocia, the principal city of the Roman province of Cappadocia, in Asia Minor.
2. Julian the Apostate occupied the imperial throne from 361 to 363.

filled with great fury, angered not only at Eupsychius but at the whole city. He immediately ordered all the eminent citizens seized; some he put to death, and others he sent into exile and deprived of their possessions. He also confiscated the property of all the churches of Caesarea, and ordered that the clergy be enrolled in military service and forcibly led away to the regiments. The city was deprived of the honored name "Caesarea"[3], which it had received in the reign of Claudius[4], and was ordered to be called by its former name, "Maza." It was struck from the list of cities and reduced to the rank of a village, and a great tribute was imposed upon its inhabitants, the faithful Christians, together with the strictest command that they restore without fail the temple that had been destroyed. Julian threatened with an oath that he would not cease to keep the city under his displeasure, nor leave the Galileans alive (as he called the Christians), unless they rebuilt the destroyed temple of the Hellenic gods—and this threat would have been carried out had not swift destruction overtaken the God-hating emperor[5].

As for St. Eupsychius, whom Julian regarded as the chief culprit in the destruction of the temple, he ordered that he be subjected to torments and compelled to offer sacrifice to idols. The holy Martyr was kept in chains, repeatedly brought forth for torture, and compelled to serve the idols. He was promised pardon for daring to destroy the temple, if only he would bow down to the idols. But the warrior of Christ did not yield, and stood courageously in his confession of the name of Christ. He was hung upon a gibbet and his flesh was torn to the entrails with iron combs, but an Angel appeared to him amid his torments and strengthened him. At last, after long and grievous tortures, he was beheaded with the sword[6], and from the wound, instead of blood, milk and water flowed forth miraculously. The faithful took his holy body and buried it with honor.

At that time Julian, setting out on a campaign against the Persians, passed through Cappadocia and drew near to Caesarea. Great danger

3. The name "Caesarea" derives from the word "Caesar," the title of the Roman emperors.
4. Evidently the Roman emperor Claudius I, who reigned from 41–54.
5. Julian the Apostate died during the campaign into Persia, pierced by an arrow. Before his death he exclaimed: "Thou hast conquered me, O Galilean," meaning by "Galilean" our Lord Jesus Christ.

threatened the city, for the lawless tormentor had already openly declared his intention to raze it to its foundations. Then St. Basil the Great, rendering Julian the honor due to an emperor, went out to meet him and presented him with three barley loaves for a blessing, such as he himself ate.

The emperor ordered his armor-bearers to take the loaves and give St. Basil a handful of hay, saying:

– You gave us barley, the food of beasts; now receive hay from us.

St. Basil the Great replied:

– Emperor, we brought you what we ourselves eat, but you have given us food for beasts. You mock us, for by your power you cannot turn hay into bread, the natural food of men.

Julian said to him angrily:

– Know that I shall feed you with this hay when I return here from Persia. I shall raze this city to its foundations, plow its site with a plow, and turn it into a field. For I know well that at your counsel the people dared to destroy the image and temple of Fortune.

Having said this, the emperor went on his way and soon perished: he was slain by the holy Great Martyr Mercurius, as is told in the Life of St. Basil the Great. After Julian's death, the people of Caesarea built a beautiful church over the tomb of the holy Martyr Eupsychius, and his holy relics poured forth streams of healings, to the glory of Christ our God, glorified with the Father and the Spirit unto the ages. Amen.

* * *

Suffering of the Holy Venerable Martyr Vadim, Archimandrite

Страдание святого преподобномученика Вадима архимандрита

During the slaying of the holy Forty Persian Martyrs, by order of King Sapor[7], the holy Archimandrite Vadim was also seized and cast into prison, together with seven of his disciples. This holy man came from the city of Bethlapata in Persia, and from a very

6. This was in the year 362.
7. Evidently the Persian king Shapur II, surnamed the Great. He reigned from 310 to 381.

wealthy family; but when he resolved to become a monk, he distributed all his wealth to the poor and, having built a monastery outside the city, lived there virtuously, striving in all things to please God and fulfill His holy will. For he was a man full of grace and truth, an elect vessel of God. This Venerable Father, guided by divine and perfect wisdom, ascended a desert mountain and, dwelling there, received the blessing of God his Savior and beheld the face of the God of Jacob[8]. In those times he was, as it were, leaven for Persia—the leaven of martyrdom and steadfast confession of Christ, which strengthened the weak in faith. He was truly a rock of faith, like the Christians of old; an excellent priest of God, who guided many upon the path of salvation, and who had courageously and steadfastly resolved to suffer martyrdom for Christ, displaying great zeal for God. He was pure from every defilement, and no evil deed had a place in him: covetousness was far from him, and his desires had been extinguished and could do him no harm. He was free from every passion for acquiring possessions and incapable of being ensnared by gold. Pride was humbled before him, arrogance trampled by him as dust, while poverty and meekness loved him. Righteousness cleaved to him, and truth shone within him; love embraced his will, and peace kissed him and rejoiced in him (cf. Ps. 84:11–12). Concord and unity of mind dwelt in his heart, and this man was filled with every fruit of righteousness; all were richly satisfied by his spiritual fruits.

He spent four months in prison in chains with his disciples, and each day endured cruel beatings, bearing them patiently, strengthened by hope and sincere faith in God.

At that time there was a certain Nirsan, governor of the city of Aria in the province of Vidgermi. This Nirsan was a Christian, and when the king compelled him to bow down to the sun, he refused to renounce the holy faith of Christ and was put in chains. But afterward he grew fainthearted, was terrified by the torments that awaited him, and did not remain steadfast to the end in his confession of Christ. Loving this brief life and the vain honor bestowed by the king, he forfeited divine life and

8. The expression is from Ps. 23:3–6.

eternal glory. Yet, as the account that follows will show, he was not to enjoy the pleasures of this world: while fleeing martyrdom, he fell into torments; and while seeking earthly glory, he received dishonor, because he preferred a temporal and corruptible king to the heavenly and eternal King, promising to do all that King Sapor commanded. The king, hearing of his decision, was greatly pleased and, recalling St. Vadim, immediately ordered that he be released from his chains and brought to him from prison. He said to the nobles standing before him:

– If Nirsan kills Vadim with his own hands, he shall be freed from his chains and receive all of Vadim's possessions.

The king's words were immediately conveyed to Nirsan, and he agreed to carry out the king's will exactly. St. Vadim was brought before Nirsan, and the wretched Nirsan, taking a naked sword, prepared to kill the martyr of Christ; but, overcome with fear, he stood motionless as a stone.

Then the servant of Christ looked at him and said:

– Has your wickedness gone so far, Nirsan, that you have not only renounced your God, but are beginning to kill His servants as well? Woe to you, wretched man! What will you do when you stand before the Dread Judgment to give account to the eternal God? I am ready to die for my Christ, but I would not wish to receive death at your hands.

Nirsan was not ashamed by these words, but was unable to carry out the tsar's command, and continued to stand in fear. At last, setting his face like stone and hardening his heart like iron, he struck the martyr on the neck with his sword. But because the murderer's hands were trembling, he could not kill the saint at once; only after many blows did he scarcely sever the saint's head.

In this manner of suffering, the Venerable Vadim gave his holy soul to God, and all the unbelievers present at his death marveled at the martyr's endurance, for as he received repeated blows of the sword, he stood immovable as a stone pillar. They all laughed at the murderer as a coward and treated him with contempt.

A short time later, Nirsan received the fitting recompense for his deeds: from many and varied torments of soul, he ended his life in despair by suicide!

St. Vadim suffered a martyr's death for Christ Jesus on the eighth day of April. His body, cast outside the city, was secretly taken by devout men and buried with honor.

And his seven disciples remained in the prison and stayed there for four years, until the death of King Shapur.

When they were released in peace, they were permitted to confess the Christian faith, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory for ever. Amen.

On the same day is the memory of the holy martyrs: Disan the bishop, Mariav the presbyter, Abdiesus and two hundred and seventy others, who suffered under the Persian king Shapur, in the years 362–364.

* * *

ALSO COMMEMORATED THIS DAY

On the same day is the memory of the holy martyrs: Disav the bishop, Mariav the presbyter, Abdiesus and 270 others, who suffered under the Persian king Shapur, in the years 362–364.

THE TENTH DAY OF APRIL

April 10

10 апреля

New Calendar April 10 · Old Calendar April 23 (civil dates)

Passion of the Holy Martyr Terentius and Those with Him

Страдание святого мученика Терентия и прочих с ним

The impious Roman emperor Decius,[1] desiring to turn all people to his pernicious idolatrous faith, sent a decree throughout all the regions of his kingdom commanding that Christians be compelled to idol-worship and to the eating of what is sacrificed to idols, and that the disobedient be brought to trial and put to death. When this decree was received by the governor of Africa, Fortunatianus, he took his seat on the judgment-seat, gathered the whole people before him, and announced:

"Offer sacrifice to the gods; otherwise you will be cruelly tortured and perish by an evil death."

With these words the governor displayed the instruments of torture, and many, at the sight of them, were frightened and renounced the faith of Christ. But some of the faithful, forty in number, firmly resolved to die for Christ, and said to one another with boldness:

"Let us be steadfast, brethren; let us not deny Christ our God, lest He also deny us before His heavenly Father and His holy Angels. Let us remember what the Lord said: 'And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell' (Mt. 10:28)." When the servants of Christ encouraged one another with such words, Fortunatianus said to them:

1. Emperor Decius, a well-known persecutor of Christians; he reigned A.D. 249–261.

"I marvel how you, men of mature age and reason, have come to such madness as to acknowledge as the one God and King Him whom the Jews crucified as a malefactor."

Saint Terentius answered him on behalf of all:

"If you, governor, having abandoned the idolatrous delusion, had come to know the power of the crucified Christ, you would have worshipped and served Him; for He is the compassionate, merciful, and gracious Son of God. By the good pleasure of God His Father, He came down to earth, united His Divinity with humanity, and for our salvation voluntarily endured the Cross."

The governor said:

"Offer sacrifice to the gods, or I will burn your bodies and destroy you."

"Do you think to frighten us with fear?" answered Saint Terentius. "No, we are not so weak as to abandon eternal life and its Giver and bow down to idols. Do quickly what you wish to do, devise torment for us, for we, the servants of Christ, are firm and steadfast."

Then the governor, in wrath, commanded that they be stripped and led into the temple of the idols. The idols were adorned with gold and silver and costly garments. Entering the temple, the governor said to the saints:

"Offer sacrifice to the mighty god Hercules, for great is his power and glorious his majesty."

"You are in error," said Saint Terentius, "your gods are stone and wood, bronze and iron, adorned with gold to beguile men and turn them from eternal life; for they neither see, nor speak, nor hear, nor walk, since they are cast and fashioned by human hands: 'Let those who make them be like them, and all who trust in them' (Ps. 113:16)."

Hearing these words, the governor commanded that Terentius, Africanus, Maximus and Pompeius be confined in the inner cells of the prison and closely guarded, saying:

"Tomorrow I will bring them out for trial."

The blessed Zeno, Alexander, Theodore and others, thirty-six in all, he ordered to be brought to the tribunal near the temple of the idols, and said to them:

"Your first disputation has produced no success or benefit; therefore now listen to me and offer sacrifices to the great god Hercules."

The saints answered:

"We have said many times that we are Christians; you learned this from the first questions, and you will never be able to persuade us to bow down to unclean idols."

The governor said:

"If you will not willingly obey my exhortations, I will compel you by force to carry out the command of the invincible emperors," and he ordered them mercilessly beaten with knotted rods and dried sinews.

But the holy martyrs, raising their hands to heaven, cried out with one voice:

"Look upon us, O Lord our God, help Thy servants and deliver us from the adversary."

Hearing this, the governor ordered them beaten more severely, so that the attendants changed many times and the supply of rods and sinews was exhausted. Then the governor ordered them struck with clubs, and although the very entrails of the martyrs were laid bare, their faces were so bright and cheerful that all marveled at the invincible patience and courage of the saints. After the scourging, the governor said to them:

"Offer sacrifice to the gods, and then I will release you."

The saints were silent, and he, in anger, commanded that iron rods be heated and their shoulders burned, and their wounds be sprinkled with vinegar mixed with salt and rubbed with woolen rags. Then the holy martyrs of Christ, looking up to heaven, said:

"O Lord our God, who didst save from the fiery furnace the three youths Ananias, Azarias and Misael, and delivered Daniel from the mouths of lions, who didst save Moses from the hand of Pharaoh and protect Saint Thecla from fire and beasts, who givest to Thy beloved complete triumph over their enemies, who didst raise from the dead the Shepherd of the sheep, our great Lord Jesus Christ (see Heb. 13:20), who hast shown us many and various benefits, who didst create light and stretch out the heavens like a skin, who numberest the multitude of the stars and callest them all by their names (see Ps. 146:4), who hast

spread the true teaching of the faith to the ends of the earth, hear us who pray to Thee and deliver us from our afflictions, for Thine is the glory forever. Amen."

They had not yet finished their prayer when the governor, filled with fury, again commanded that they be hung up and scraped with iron claws, and blood poured in streams from their ribs; but despite the cruelty of the torments, they did not weaken in the least, for God sustained them and gave them strength and power. The governor said to them:

"Have the torments taught you, and are you ready to turn back from your madness? Or will you still remain in your impiety?"

The saints made no reply, and the governor said with rage:

"I am speaking to you, impious ones!"

Then the saints, looking up to heaven, said:

"Almighty God, who once didst pour down fire upon the city of Sodom for its iniquity, overthrow now also this impious temple of unclean gods, for the sake of Thy truth."

With these words they made the sign of the Cross on their foreheads and breathed toward the idol-house, and at once the idols fell in it with a great crash and were scattered to dust. Then the holy martyrs said to the governor:

"See what your gods are; where now is their strength and power? Could they protect themselves?"

Soon the temple too fell and was destroyed to its foundations. Then the governor, in dreadful anger at the ruin of the temple and the idols, commanded that the holy martyrs be beheaded. They, however, rejoiced at such a sentence, glorified God and went with joy to the place of execution, and there, kneeling, gladly stretched out their necks beneath the sword for Christ's sake, and died by the sword. The faithful took their holy bodies and buried them in a holy place.

After the slaying of these holy martyrs, the governor ordered Saint Terentius, Africanus, Maximus and Pompeius brought before him, and said to them:

"Offer sacrifice to the gods, or you will perish by an evil death, and no one can deliver you from my hands."

The saints answered:

"We are Christians, and we have placed our hope in Christ; we will not bow down to demons, nor serve your gods, and we do not fear your torments. Appoint for us whatever torments you wish; we believe in our God that you will be conquered by us, as the devil was conquered by Christ, who will give us strength to overcome your evil purpose."

The governor ordered the holy martyrs to be led back to prison, heavy iron stocks placed on their necks, their hands and feet bound in iron chains, and in such a state laid upon iron tridents spread on the floor; and he ordered that no one be admitted to the prison, so that no one might bring them food. While the saints were in this torment and prayed to God, at midnight a light shone in the prison, and an Angel of the Lord appeared to them and said:

"Terentius, Africanus, Maximus and Pompeius, servants of the Most High God, rise and strengthen your bodies."

Having said this, the Angel touched their fetters, and they at once fell from them, and there appeared before them a table full of all manner of food.

And the Angel said:

"Rest and take the food which Christ has sent you."

The saints, blessing Christ God, were refreshed with food and drink and gave thanks to their Master. The guards, seeing the light in the prison, entered and saw the holy martyrs rejoicing and making merry, and reported it to the governor. The governor, bringing the martyrs to trial in the morning, said to them:

"Have not the torments taught you, and are you not ready to turn back from your madness? Come to the gods and bow down to them."

Saint Terentius answered:

"God preserve us from this madness, us and all who love God; for 'the foolishness of God is wiser than men' (1 Cor. 1:25), and human wisdom is folly before God. We would be mad indeed if, abandoning God, we bowed down to demons, as you do."

The governor, enraged by these words, ordered them to be hung up and scraped with iron claws. Enduring such torment, the saints prayed to God and said:

"Jesus Christ, Son of the God who lives forever, light of Christians, our firm hope, be with us and help us, and do not put us to shame, as we suffer for Thy holy name."

Praying thus, they did not feel the torments, for Christ lightened their pains.

Then the governor ordered them cast back into the prison again, and, summoning sorcerers and enchanters who knew how to charm wild beasts and reptiles, he commanded them, by means of incantations, to gather the most savage creatures, asps, vipers and serpents, and to shut them up together with the martyrs in the prison. But the reptiles, crawling about the feet of the holy martyrs, did not touch them and did no harm to them; and the saints sang and glorified God. Thus they remained in the prison with the reptiles for three days and three nights. On the fourth day, at night, the governor sent to learn whether the martyrs had been slain by the reptiles. Those sent, approaching the prison doors, heard the holy prisoners singing and glorifying God. Wishing to learn more exactly what was taking place in the prison, they climbed onto the roof and, opening it, saw that the saints were sitting while an Angel of God was not allowing the reptiles to approach the martyrs. Seeing this, they were terrified and at once reported what they had seen to the governor.

Early in the morning the governor ordered the enchanters to remove from the prison the serpents, asps, vipers and all their reptiles, and to bring the martyrs to judgment. When the enchanters came to the prison and began to speak their customary incantations, the reptiles did not obey them, but with great fury all rushed out through the open doors upon their enchanters and struck them dead, together with all the people who were there. After this the saints were brought into the court, and the governor, seeing them unharmed, was filled with rage and sentenced them to be beheaded with the sword. Then the passion-bearers were filled with ineffable joy, and, going to death with gladness, they sang:

"Thou hast delivered us, O Lord, from those who afflict us, and hast put to shame those who hate us."

The servants, bringing them to the place of execution, carried out what had been commanded them, and the Confessors of Christ received the crown of martyrdom. Reverent men took up their holy bodies and with honor buried them two stadia from the city, to the glory of our Savior Jesus Christ, Who lives and reigns unto ages of ages. Amen.

Kontakion, Tone 2:

The honorable memory of the martyrs has come today, gladdening all things: the memory of wise Terentius and his company. Let us therefore hasten eagerly, that we may receive healing; for they received from God the grace of the Holy Spirit to heal the infirmities of our souls.

On the same day, the memory of the holy martyrs James the presbyter, and Azadan and Avdiky the deacons, who suffered in Persia under Sapor, about the year 380.

* * *

ALSO COMMEMORATED THIS DAY

On the same day, the memory of the holy martyrs James the presbyter, and Azadan and Avdiky the deacons, who suffered in Persia under Sapor, about the year 380.

THE ELEVENTH DAY OF APRIL

April 11

11 апреля

New Calendar April 11 · Old Calendar April 24 (civil dates)

Suffering of the Holy Hieromartyr Antipas, Bishop of Pergamum

Страдание святого священномученика Антипы, епископа Пергамского

In the reign of the Emperor Domitian[1] there broke out a great persecution against the Christians, and decrees were sent to all the princes and governors commanding that the Christians obey the imperial edicts without question, adopt the pagan faith and worship the idols. Then a multitude of the faithful appeared who fearlessly confessed the word of God, and there was revealed the great courage of the martyrs who labored for Christ the Savior. At this time the great Apostle, St. John the Theologian, was also banished to the island of Patmos[2]—that pillar of the Church, foundation of Christian truth, and preacher of the eternal Godhead of the Only-begotten Son of God. On Patmos the Lord appeared to him in revelation amid seven lampstands, and commanded him to write to the seven Angels, that is, the bishops of the seven churches of Asia Minor, and to strengthen the hosts of martyrs. In this the Lord also made mention of Bishop Antipas, of whom the present narrative treats. The Lord said to His disciple: "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is; and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful witness, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth" (Rev. 2:13).

For St. Antipas was bishop of the Church of Pergamum[3]. From these words of the Revelation of John it is evident what a faithful wit-

1. The Roman emperor Domitian reigned from 81 to 96 A.D.

ness of Christ Antipas was, and what the inhabitants of the city of Pergamum were, which was the dwelling-place of Satan. Among them St. Antipas was like a light amid darkness, like a rose among thorns, like gold in the mire, or rather, in the furnace of fire, according to what is written: "He tried them as gold in the furnace" (Wisd. 3:6).

There even the law of nature was not observed, and there was no discretion, but each took vengeance for himself, and the strong oppressed the weak; and he was counted brave, good and righteous who struck or slew the Christians. And when the unbelievers thus oppressed and harassed the Christian community, the blessed Antipas, a man unshaken in faith and steadfast in virtue, was not in the least dismayed, but, as though having changed human nature into an angelic one, stood firmly and fearlessly against his enemies.

Disdaining the threats of the tormentors, he often went out among the people, and shone among them like the dawn, and by the light of pure and right faith drove away the darkness of idolatrous error. Therefore the demons (whom the pagans regarded as gods) all fled from there, and not one of them dared to remain in the city of Pergamum, where St. Antipas lived. The demons appeared to their priests in dreams and said that they no longer partook of their sacrifices nor inhaled the smoke of the sacrificial offerings, since the leader of the Christians was driving them away. Then the pagans grew angry and rushed upon Antipas, and seizing him, dragged him to the place where they were accustomed to offer their unclean sacrifices. And the governor said to him:

"Are you that Antipas who does not himself fulfil the imperial commands, and teaches others to do the same, and so hinders our sacrifices that not one of the gods is permitted to be satisfied with the fat of the offerings? Because of you the gods have left our city, and there is danger that some calamity may befall it, since they will no longer be

3. Pergamum: a city in Great Mysia (in the northwestern part of Asia Minor), was the capital of the Kingdom of Pergamum. In antiquity it was famed for its wealth, luxury and extensive library, and also for the invention, or more precisely the improvement, of the preparation of parchment (leather for writing). This city was later annexed to the Roman Empire.

2. Patmos: a barren, rocky island in the Aegean Sea, to the southwest of Ephesus, between Sanopus and Naxos.

willing to protect it. Enough of your persisting in Christian sorcery; now repent and submit to our laws, so that the gods who hold this fair city may not cease to have care for us and to guard us. But if you will not do this, and will not renounce your faith, and will despise our worship of the gods, you will be subjected to a fitting punishment according to Roman law."

St. Antipas answered this:

"Know this one thing, governor, that I am a Christian, and I have no desire at all to obey the mad and impious command of the emperor. But since a fitting answer must be given to your questions, hear me. If your gods, whom you call the masters of the whole universe, have been driven out, as they themselves say, by a mortal man, and if those whom you consider your defenders and protectors themselves seek your help, then from this you can easily know your error. If they cannot avenge the insult done to them, and acknowledge themselves vanquished by one man, how can they deliver the whole human race, or even one city, from calamity? Taking this into consideration, you ought even now to turn away from your destructive error and believe in Christ, who came down from heaven to save the human race. This Christ at the end of the ages will truly come to judge all and to render to each according to his deeds, either torment or honor."

After such a sensible answer the governor again began to speak to St. Antipas:

"You obey new laws and statutes invented by yourselves, and have disdained the ancient worship of the gods, which we from the beginning received from our forefathers and which has come down to us by inheritance. It is not good to depart from the customs of our forefathers, for the old is better than the new, and is more trustworthy, and what has been confirmed by the antiquity of time is more worthy of praise. Therefore you too must change your belief and not follow a Man who appeared in recent times and by certain sorceries disturbed human life, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate. Submit, then, to the commands of the emperor, and you will live with us without want, and we will help you in everything and love you with filial love; for your old age deserves that we love and honor you as a father."

To this St. Antipas answered:

"Even if you were to present to me countless arguments, I shall not be so mad and senseless as, having reached deep old age and drawing near to death, to change my faith and for the sake of this wretched and dishonorable life to depart from the confession of faith that has been established. Therefore do not beguile my mind, which is constantly occupied with reading the divine books. For at first none of your gods existed; they appeared afterward and did no good, and no benefit came to us from them at all; but since they themselves were base and worthless, so they became the cause of an evil and lustful life for others. And if one must preserve the ancient evil customs, then one should imitate Cain, the fratricide. Why do you not follow those who wished to ascend to heaven and were not ashamed of incest with their own sisters, for which they were destroyed by the flood? If you too imitate their lawlessness because of its antiquity, you will be punished not by water but by eternal fire and the worm that never sleeps, unless you repent."

After these words the impious seized the holy man and dragged him to the temple of Artemis[4], where there was a bronze bull; heating this bull, they threw the holy martyr into it. He, making the sign of the cross, prayed to God, crying:

"O God, who hast revealed to us the mystery hidden from the ages in our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom Thou hast disclosed to us the unfathomable depths of Thy counsel, I thank Thee for all Thy benefactions: that Thou savest us who hope in Thee, and hast vouchsafed me the honor, at this hour, of being inscribed among the number of the holy martyrs who have suffered for Thy holy name. Receive my spirit, which now departs from this life, and grant me to find grace with Thee and with Thine Only-begotten Son—and make not only me but also those who shall live after me partakers of Thy mercy, that Thy holy name may be glorified forever. Amen."

With these and similar words St. Antipas prayed for a long time, tormented in the heated bull. Then, offering prayer also for the whole

4. Artemis, otherwise Diana, a well-known pagan goddess among the Greeks, personified the moon and was regarded as the patroness of forests and of the hunt. The service of this goddess was performed with great splendour and pomp.

world, he gave up his spirit into the hands of God, as if falling asleep in sweet slumber, and ascended into heaven, adorned with the glorious crown of martyrdom[5]. Pious men took his holy relics and buried them with honor in the same city of Pergamum, and from them there flowed myrrh that heals every human infirmity, to the glory of Christ our God, who is glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever. Amen.

Troparion, Tone 4:

Thou didst abolish the flattery of idols, O Antipas, and trampling down the might of the devil, thou didst boldly confess Christ before the God-fighters. Wherefore, dwelling on high with the Angelic orders, offering praise to the Lord of all, thou dost present a thanksgiving prayer for us, bestowing the grace of healing. For this we honor thee, O Hieromartyr Antipas: intercede with Christ God that He save our souls.

Kontakion, Tone 4:

Thou wast fellow-throned with the Apostles and the adornment of hierarchs, O blessed one; having been glorified as a martyr, thou didst shine like the sun, illuminating all, O sacred Antipas; thou didst dispel the deep night of godlessness. Wherefore we honor thee as a divine Hieromartyr and giver of healing.

* * *

Commemoration of the Holy Martyrs Processus and Martinian

Память святых мучеников Прокесса и Мартиниана

The holy martyrs Processus and Martinian were originally pagans and served as warders in the Mamertine prison[6], which was in Rome.

5. Hieromartyr Antipas, Bishop of Pergamum in Asia, died in 95 A.D.; his memory (April 11) was especially venerated in Constantinople, whither, under Theodosius the Great (379–395), the bull in which St. Antipas was burned was transferred from Pergamum.

6. The Mamertine Prison was located in the northern part of the city of Rome. It was intended chiefly for state criminals, among whom Christians were also counted. This prison has survived to the present day in restored form, and the sections of the prison where the Apostles Peter and Paul were confined, as a sacred place, are guarded with particular care by Catholics.

Into that prison were cast the holy Apostles Peter and Paul for preaching Christianity. Seeing the miracles performed by the Apostles in the prison, Processus and Martinian believed in Christ; and when the Apostle Peter, after prayer, traced a cross upon the Tarpeian rock[7] and brought water forth from the mountain, not only Processus and Martinian were baptized, but also all the others confined in the prison, numbering 47 persons.

Processus and Martinian, having believed in Christ and received baptism, released the Apostles from the prison; but the Lord Himself appeared to the Apostle Peter on his way out of Rome, telling him that He was going again to be crucified, and by these words He compelled him to return to Rome, where he was again taken by the soldiers.

Meanwhile, Paulinus, the governor of Processus and Martinian, was informed that they had become Christians. Calling the saints before him, Paulinus began to exhort them to renounce Christianity; but when they answered him and reviled the idols, he ordered them to be struck on the mouth. After this, when the saints remained steadfast in their confession despite new exhortations, as persistent as they were fruitless and vain, they were hanged upon the torture-tree, cruelly scourged with sharp instruments, and burned with fire on their sides. But the saints bore all these sufferings with courage, being encouraged and comforted by a Roman woman named Lucina.

Meanwhile, the chastisement of God did not tarry to overtake the impious tormentor. Paulinus, who had given the order to torment the saints, was at once punished by God with the loss of his left eye, and, being tormented by an evil spirit, died within three days.

The son of Paulinus insisted before the prefect[8] of Rome that the holy martyrs be put to death at once, and for this reason they were be-

7. The Tarpeian Rock was located on the western side of the Capitoline Hill in Rome. In ancient Rome this rock served as the place from which condemned criminals were thrown. According to Roman legend, the rock received its name on the following occasion: Tarpeia, a vestal virgin (a maiden serving at a pagan altar), during the war of Romulus with the Sabine king Titus Tatius, tempted by the promise of gold, admitted the Sabines into the Capitol. Since by agreement the Sabines were to give Tarpeia what they wore on their left arm, when they entered the Capitol they overwhelmed the traitress, instead of the bracelets she had expected, with their shields, under whose weight she died. From that time this cliff came to be called the Tarpeian Rock.
8. Prefect: the governor of the city.

headed outside the walls of the city of Rome[9]. Their honorable bodies were taken by the aforementioned Lucina and buried with the honors befitting holy martyrs.

On the same day is the memory of the Venerable Pharmuthius, who lived in the fourth century in the same desert where the Venerable John, commemorated on March 29, laboured in a well, and whom Pharmuthius served, nourishing him.

* * *

ALSO COMMEMORATED THIS DAY

On the same day is the memory of the Venerable Pharmuthius, who lived in the fourth century in the same desert where the Venerable John laboured in a well; Pharmuthius served him and nourished him.

9. The death of the holy martyrs took place in the second half of the first century. Their relics now rest in the Vatican Cathedral of the Apostle Peter, in the chapel bearing their name.

THE TWELFTH DAY OF APRIL

April 12

12 апреля

New Calendar April 12 · Old Calendar April 25 (civil dates)

Life of Our Venerable Mother Athanasia

Житие преподобной матери нашей Афанасии

To describe the lives and labors of the saints for the edification of those who read or hear them is not only a praiseworthy and salutary work, but also the fulfilment of the Apostolic commandment that bids us keep their memory. This is what prompts us to offer, though briefly, an account of the life of the blessed Athanasia, all the more so because the good examples of her life, being events of long past times, might be forgotten, and many would thus be deprived of most instructive lessons for their souls.

This woman, worthy of praise and bearing a name akin to immortality[1], who showed herself in her virtuous life a faithful and good servant of the heavenly Lord, was descended from pious and noble parents, Nicetas and Maria. They lived on the island of Aegina[2], where the young maiden was born who was afterwards to become a chosen vessel of the Holy Spirit. Already at the age of seven she quickly learned to read the Psalter, and, showing a love of books, she applied herself with especial diligence to reading Holy Scripture. Once, while working at the loom, she saw a brilliant star descending toward her from above; reaching her breast and illuminating her entirely, it vanished. From that time the maiden was enlightened in soul: having come to hate the vanity of the world, she resolved to enter a monastery. But her parents strongly opposed their daughter's good intention and forced her, against her will, to marry. In marriage she lived only sixteen days, after which she

1. Athanasius, in Greek, means "immortality."
2. This island lies near Greece.

was unexpectedly widowed: wild Moors suddenly attacked that land, so that Athanasia's husband had to go to war, where, by the inscrutable providence of God, he was killed. Widowed, Athanasia again resolved to withdraw into a monastery, but before she could carry out her desire, a decree of the emperor arrived, requiring that maidens and young widows be given in marriage to his soldiers. Persuaded by her parents, Athanasia married a second time. And in this new marriage she did not neglect the care of her salvation: not captivated by pleasures, and not giving herself over to excessive concern for temporal goods, she spent almost all her time either in reading Holy Scripture or in singing psalms. Meekness and sincere humility formed her chief adornment, so that her household could not but regard her with love, and her neighbors, who knew her virtuous life, could not but speak of her with praise. She so loved to help the poor that at times there was nothing left in her wealthy house to give in alms: she received with honor the monks and strangers who came to her, lovingly giving them shelter; to widows, orphans and all who were in need she generously distributed what was necessary for life. Once, when a severe famine came upon that land, reducing many to beggary, Athanasia fed not only her co-religionists but also the pagans who lived there: dying of hunger, they came to the blessed Athanasia, and she gave them not only food and clothing but everything else they lacked, thus fulfilling the word of the Lord: "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (Lk. 6:36), "that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mt. 5:45).

On Sundays and feast days Athanasia cordially invited her neighbors to her home and read Holy Scripture to them, instilling in them love for God and instructing them in a virtuous life. Thus, ever growing in a God-pleasing life, Athanasia was adorned with virtues as a field in spring is adorned with flowers. After some years of marriage, she persuaded her husband to renounce the world with its allurements and go into a monastery: he heeded his wife's admonitions, and, becoming a true monk leading a life worthy of his calling, he departed in peace to the Lord some time after his tonsure.

Left free, the blessed Athanasia devoted her whole life exclusively to the service of God. Finding other pious women who possessed the same love for God and had the same intentions as she, she gladly joined them. Soon, having distributed her property to the poor and received the tonsure from a pious elder, the women withdrew from the world, choosing for a life of silence a certain secluded place. Some three or four years later, despite the refusal of the blessed Athanasia, the women persuaded her to accept authority over them.

But she, although she bore the title of abbess, considered herself the least among them, in accordance with the commandment of the Lord: "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister" (Mt. 20:26).

And it is hard to find words to express the height of her humility: considering herself unworthy even to dwell among the women, she considered herself all the more unworthy to accept services from them; therefore she never allowed any of them to wait upon her, not even to pour water over her hands. Her abstinence was very great: only in the evening did she eat a little bread, and she drank no more water than was needed to quench her thirst; oil and wine, cheese and fish she partook of, with thanksgiving to God, only on the feasts of the Nativity of Christ and the Bright Resurrection of Christ; during the holy Great Lent and the remaining fasts her food was uncooked greens alone, which she took only every second day; and during those days she drank as little water as possible. Stones laid upon the ground and covered with rough hair-cloth were her bed, which every night, like David (see Ps. 6:7), she bathed with her tears; and these tears, stirred by love for God and consciousness of her sinfulness, flowed from her eyes like streams during prayers and psalmody. Athanasia's outer garment was made of sheep's wool; on her body she wore a coarse hair-shirt. She slept very little, but spent most of the night in fervent prayer to God and in pious meditation, and by day, either alone or together with the other women, she occupied herself with the singing of psalms. She took care that no hour passed without prayer, and constantly glorified the Lord, imitating David, who says: "I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Ps. 33:2).

Until the very end of her life, from the day she entered the monastery, she never once tasted any garden fruit. Athanasia saw much sorrow in governing the sisters and caring for them, yet by humility and meekness she never spoke a reproachful or offensive word to any of them; no one ever heard from her anything hurtful, whether to the lowly or the great, to slave or free; the sisters' repeated acts of disobedience she bore meekly and calmly, hoping for recompense in the future life. After four years of governing the sisters, the blessed Athanasia came to the thought of moving from that place to another, where it would be more convenient to serve God in silence. By God's providence she found an elder monk named Matthew, a priest and abbot, a virtuous and holy man. Learning of the women's good intention, he pointed out to them the place they desired on the same island of Aegina: this was a deserted mountain, where there also stood an ancient church dedicated to the holy Protomartyr Stephen. Seeing this place, the Venerable Athanasia said: "I have long known of it in spirit, and I think we shall live here until death." The Venerable Matthew, with the blessing of the bishop of that land, established a monastery for the blessed Athanasia and her sisters at the church of St. Stephen.

The life of the Venerable Matthew is worthy of mention, though in few words. This venerable father undertook a great ascetic labor: each night he read through the Psalter, adding prayers to his reading; and when the need for rest arose, he slept not lying down but sitting up, and only for the briefest time. While the psalms were being sung, the prayers read, or the unbloody sacrifice offered, he would be so overcome with compunction that he could not restrain his tears, and those present could not but profit from so moving a sight. The Venerable Matthew wore only a rough hair shirt and by great abstinence and labors had utterly dried up his flesh. He had a particular love for the Holy Evangelist John the Theologian, the beloved disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Once, in summer, on the feast day of this holy Apostle, the Venerable Matthew, as he approached the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, said to one of the priests serving with him: "Who is worthy today to be at Ephesus and to see there the Holy Evangelist John the Theologian?" After these words he sighed from the depths of his heart

and wept bitterly. And a wondrous event took place: the venerable father and two priests serving with him beheld St. John the Theologian standing by the Holy Table; the vision continued until the end of the Liturgy. From this sight St. Matthew was so overcome with compunction and filled with such spiritual joy that for the next three days he could not partake of food. Once a man completely paralyzed was brought to the venerable father; moved with pity, he took off his own mantle and clothed the paralytic with it, and the man was immediately healed. Another man came to him with his face twisted by the action of the devil, and when the venerable father touched his face with his hand, making the sign of the Cross over him, the face at once returned to its normal appearance. Likewise an elderly woman, tormented by an unclean spirit, came to the saint and by his prayers was freed from her tormentor. In a similar way another nun, who likewise suffered from an unclean spirit, was healed.

But this great servant of God, as is seen from what has just been related, who had received from the Lord the gift of healing, by the inscrutable judgments of God died a violent death in the water. The ship on which the venerable father was traveling, bound for Constantinople, sank with all the people aboard. The island of Aegina, therefore, was deprived of the relics of the venerable father, which would have been a source of healing for many. After him, the presbyter and abbot was a eunuch from birth named Ignatius; by his virtuous life and the gifts received from the Lord he was like the Venerable Matthew; not turning aside from the path of God-pleasing life until death, he honorably departed to the Lord; at his tomb demons were cast out and healings from illnesses were received. Now let us return again to the narrative of the life of the Venerable Athanasia.

It has been said that the Venerable Athanasia possessed great meekness and humility. Praying almost constantly to God, she would sometimes, gazing at the sky, see a wondrous sight which filled her with awe: she saw a bright cloud scattering the rays of the sun, and in the midst of it a certain man shining with ineffable beauty. This repeated vision filled her with wonder and made her ask herself: "Who has endowed this man with such beauty? For what virtues has he been

granted so great a glorification?" While she was pondering this, she seemed to hear a voice addressing her with these words: "Humility united with meekness has adorned the man at whom you marvel; know that through these same virtues you too will attain the same."

Each day, contemplating this wondrous appearance, the venerable woman adorned herself with humility and meekness with such zeal that it was hard to find anyone like her in this respect: there was not the slightest trace of anger or pride to be seen in her; she progressed also in the remaining virtues, and so her soul's eye, unclouded by sin, could behold on high these wondrous appearances. At the same time the Lord also granted her the gift of working miracles. Once, when she was alone devoutly reflecting, a man came to her whose eyes were severely painful, and asked her to pray to God for him. She, with humility and, as if consoling him, said:

"I too suffer from an eye ailment; endure it as I do, and God will help you."

But he did not leave her, asking in faith for healing. Then the blessed Athanasia laid her hand upon his eyes, saying:

"May our Lord Jesus Christ, who healed the man blind from birth, grant you, brother, perfect healing."

And at once the man was freed from his illness. The fame of the blessed Athanasia spread throughout the land; multitudes of the sick came to the monastery and through the Venerable Woman's prayers received healing there. At the church of St. Stephen the Venerable Athanasia founded three more churches: one in the name of the Most Holy Theotokos, another in the name of St. John the Forerunner, and a third in the name of St. Nicholas the Hierarch and Wonderworker; she especially adorned the church of the Most Holy Theotokos, receiving everything necessary for its furnishing from pious people who deeply respected the venerable woman.

But glory and honor from people, and the burden of those who came to her, produced in her dissatisfaction and a desire to withdraw to some other place. Taking two sisters, Marina and Eupraxia, she secretly departed for Constantinople, where she spent seven years in a women's

monastery. Greatly grieving for the church of the Most Holy Theotokos that she had loved and built by her labors, she often said with tears:

"Constraint and vain human honor forced me to withdraw from the church of my Lady, the Mother of God; fleeing empty glory, I have left her splendid church, and now I sit here as a stranger."

Yet even there the venerable woman could not remain unknown, and here too God glorified His servant: she began to cast out demons and heal the sick. The report of her reached also her sisters who lived in the monastery on Aegina; coming to the blessed Athanasia, they begged her to return with them to their monastery, to which a certain vision also prompted her. The venerable woman said to the sisters Eupraxia and Marina: "It is time for us to return home: in a vision I saw the church of the Most Holy Theotokos standing open, from which we were commanded to enter it."

And leaving Constantinople, she returned with her sisters to her monastery on the island of Aegina. Here, shortly after her return, she fell seriously ill and learned of her death twelve days in advance: she saw two men clad in white robes who, approaching her, handed her a written paper and said: "Here is your freedom; take it and rejoice." Coming to herself after the vision, she understood that she would soon depart to the Lord and therefore for twelve days remained in prayer and devout reflection, taking neither food nor drink; to the sisters around her she said:

"Sing, my sisters, and unceasingly praise God, that He may be merciful to our sins."

When the twelfth day came, the venerable woman said, addressing them:

"Help me, for I am already very weak; go into the church and finish the reading of the Psalter, for I can no longer, since I have nearly lost all strength."

Weeping, they asked her:

"To which psalm have you read? Where should we begin the reading?"

She answered quietly:

"I am now reading the ninetieth psalm, and I am no longer able."

The sisters went and finished the reading of the Psalter. Then they came and fell before the bed of the venerable woman, asking her for a last prayer for themselves. She prayed for all, and embracing Marina and Eupraxia, said:

"My beloved sisters, on this day we are parting, but in the age to come God will unite us again; may the Lord grant you peace of love and unanimity, and may He send down upon you His mercies."

During these and her other farewell words her face shone like light, so that those present were filled with wonder and awe. Meanwhile the feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos was drawing near, and the venerable woman said to the sisters:

"See that you forget nothing necessary for the feast; let the service also be conducted in good order, and prepare a festive meal for the orphans, the poor, and the widows; and after the Divine Liturgy you will commit my poor body to the earth."

Having said this and embraced the sisters named, she reposed in the Lord, as though falling into her ordinary natural sleep. She was as if alive: she herself closed her eyes and shut her mouth, so that there was no need for the customary service after death. And the sisters, falling at her body, lamented their orphanhood in this way:

"Where," they said, "have you departed, our holy mother, whose name is akin to immortality? Have you indeed left us wholly orphaned by withdrawing from our eyes? Where shall we again see your angelic face? Where shall we hear your voice, comforting us in sorrows and guiding us to good deeds? The lamp that gave us courage and hope has gone out! Here you sleep, while we are near death from longing for you; we shall no more see you taking part with us in the divine services and teaching us by your words and your own example. The Lord has taken you into His immortal dwellings."

With such lamentation they prepared the venerable woman's precious body.

The Blessed Athanasia reposed on August 14, on the eve of the Feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos; on the feast itself, after the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, she was honorably buried amid the inconsolable weeping of the sisters. The sister who after the

Venerable one had received the authority of abbess did not leave her tomb day or night, and St. Athanasia appeared to her in a dream, saying: "Believe without doubting that on the fortieth day after my death I shall receive what the Lord has prepared for me." The abbess, awakening, wondered what the vision and the words of the Venerable one signified. On the fortieth day the sisters, as sometimes happens, forgot to perform the customary commemoration, thinking that it would fall two days later. That evening the holy abbess appeared and said:

"Why have you forgotten the fortieth day and done nothing for my commemoration: you did not give alms to the poor, and you did not receive, as was fitting, those who wished to commemorate me."

The abbess rose, carefully counted the days, and found that indeed the evening of the fortieth day, on which the commemoration was to be performed, had already come. Early the next morning, when the commemoration was being performed during the Divine Liturgy, two nuns, the leaders of the choir, to whom God had opened the eyes of their souls, saw in the church a wondrous sight: two radiant men, clothed in bright vestments, entered the church leading the Venerable Athanasia; having placed her before the holy sanctuary, they clothed her in a royal purple robe adorned with precious stones and placed upon her head a royal crown, surmounted at the back and front by a cross, and placed in her hand a golden scepter, likewise adorned with precious stones; then, taking her by the arms, they led her through the Royal Doors into the sanctuary.

The Prologue relates the following further about the Blessed Athanasia. As she was departing to the Lord, she commanded the sisters to set out a meal of remembrance for the poor every day throughout the whole forty-day period. But they carried out her command only until the ninth day, and then stopped. Then the saint appeared to them with two Angels and said:

"Why have you forgotten my testament? Know that alms and the priestly prayers offered for the soul during forty days propitiate God: if the souls of the departed were sinful, the Lord grants them forgiveness of sins; but if they were righteous, those who pray for them will be rewarded with blessings."

Having said this, the Venerable one thrust her staff into the ground and became invisible; the sisters, rising in the morning and seeing her staff blossomed, glorified God, the Creator of all. Thus the Prologue relates.

A year after the repose of the Venerable Athanasia, on the day of her commemoration, as Metaphrastes relates, two holy men came to the monastery, bringing with them a woman tormented by evil spirits. Removing the covering from the tomb, they dug up the earth and took out the coffin with the body of the Venerable one, and at once the unclean spirits departed and the woman became well. From the coffin there spread a fragrance, and those standing around saw myrrh dripping from it. Then they opened the coffin, and before the eyes of those present appeared the Venerable one, as if she had only just fallen asleep: her face shone with radiant beauty; her body, which exuded myrrh, was soft, so that the arms bent; nothing had submitted to corruption. This sight drew from everyone's eyes involuntary, joyful tears. The holy men, having closed the coffin, decided not to lay the relics in the earth, but to set them openly in the church, which they did: afterwards, having prepared a new tomb, they transferred the honorable relics of the Blessed Athanasia into it. The nuns, however, removing the hair shirt from the relics, prepared a new one, of silk, but when they wished to clothe the honorable relics in it, they could not do so, because St. Athanasia did not wish it. Like a living woman, she firmly held her hands against her breast, resisting the intention of the sisters: she did not desire silk garments, and even after death she loved poverty. One of the nuns, who through her virtuous life had become a chosen vessel of the Holy Spirit, knelt down and prayed, addressing the Venerable one as if she were alive:

"Our Lady, as during your life you always showed unquestioning obedience to us, so now be pleased to listen to us and to clothe yourself in this humble garment that we bring."

When she had prayed, the Venerable Athanasia listened to her, and, oh wonder! rising, she sat up, stretching out her hands for the garment; after she had been clothed, she lay down again in the coffin. And many miracles were performed at her holy relics: healings from every kind of

sickness were obtained, demons left people through her holy prayers; there would not be time enough for a detailed description of all her miracles, and let those who read or hear her life not grieve over this: let us be content with a brief yet nonetheless profitable account of the Venerable one.

And you, Blessed Athanasia, honored by the name of immortality, companion of the Divine Angels, who for Christ's sake became poor according to the Gospel and were enriched with divine gifts, who always wept and obtained an unbreakable consolation, who lived your temporal life in thirst and hunger and received eternal blessedness, merciful to the poor and shown mercy by God, you who, for the purity of your heart, received the light of the Holy Spirit and peace into your soul, who became a temple of the Holy Spirit and a treasury of virtues on earth, for which you were also granted ineffable glorification in heaven, you who have taken up your abode in the assembly of the saints and share their blessedness, remember us also, who praise your virtuous life and with spiritual joy honor your memory. Look upon our life, led amid the rebellious waves of the world, so that, living righteously by your prayers, we may escape the snares of the devil and be granted together with you eternal blessedness by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom to the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory, honor and worship, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

* * *

Life of our Venerable Father Isaac the Syrian

Житие преподобного отца нашего Исаака Сирина

St. Gregory the Dialogist, Pope of Rome, in his Dialogues with the deacon Peter,[3] relates the following about St. Isaac. In the days of the ancient Goths, near the city of Spoleto, there lived a most

3. This dialogue or conversation is contained in the well-known work of St. Gregory the Great, "Dialogues concerning the Life and Miracles of the Italian Fathers," for which he received the name Dialogist. The work consists of four books and contains accounts of the ascetic feats of pious people, performed by them with the assistance of the grace of God; St. Gregory drew the information for these accounts partly from his own conversations with the Italian fathers, and partly it was supplied to him by Maximilian, Bishop of Syracuse.

righteous man named Isaac; he remained here until the end of the rule of the Goths,[4] and he was known to many inhabitants of Rome. Among them, a maiden named Gregoria, who lived in Rome at the church of the Most Holy Theotokos, especially honored St. Isaac. In the days of her youth Gregoria had been betrothed, but when the time of the wedding came, she hastened to the church, desiring to receive the monastic habit; the Venerable Isaac delivered Gregoria from her relatives, who wished to drag her out of the church by force, and, with God's help, tonsured her as a nun; thus Gregoria, having scorned an earthly bridegroom, was granted betrothal to the heavenly one. St. Gregory the Dialogist learned a great deal about St. Isaac especially from the honorable father Eleutherius, who was in close relations with the Venerable one, and what he related about St. Isaac was fully confirmed by other information about his life.

St. Isaac was not a native of Italy, but we shall describe here only those miracles which he performed in that land. When the Venerable Isaac came from Syria to Spoleto, he first of all entered the church; here he asked the sacristans to permit him to pray in the church as long as he wished, even if he should desire to remain in the church overnight after the church doors had been closed. And, standing in prayer, he spent without rest two days and a half in it. Noticing this, one of the sacristans, who was proud, and whose pride finally led him into sin, stirring up in himself an unjust indignation against the Venerable one, began to revile St. Isaac with abusive words, calling him a hypocrite who had pretended to pray for almost three days in order to win fame; then, approaching the Venerable one, he struck him on the cheek, demanding that he, as a hypocrite, leave the church in disgrace. Immediately this sacristan was overtaken by punishment: by God's permission an unclean spirit suddenly attacked him and, inflicting severe torments upon him, threw him at the feet of the man of God with a cry: "Isaac will cast me out!"

Before the unclean spirit proclaimed his name, no one knew what the stranger was called. The Venerable one bent over the tormented

4. Approximately until the beginning of the second half of the 6th century, when the dominion of the Goths in Italy finally fell.

man, and the unclean spirit at once left him. The news of what had happened in the church quickly spread through the city, and at once men and women, rich and poor, hastened to the church to invite the servant of God into their homes; some promised to build him a monastery with villages and estates, others wished to supply him with food and everything necessary for life.

But the servant of the Almighty God rejected all the promises of those who offered: going out of the city, he found not far off a desert place, where he built for himself a small cell. Many people began to flock to him here: seeing his virtuous life, some of those who came were kindled with love for eternal life and, under the Venerable one's guidance, dedicated themselves wholly to the service of God; thus a monastery came into being. When the disciples of St. Isaac asked him to accept, for the needs of the monastery, the gifts brought to him, he, firmly preserving his love of poverty, answered: "A monk who acquires property is no longer a monk; he feared losing his poverty as much as rich misers fear losing their treasures."

Saint Isaac was endowed with the gift of prophecy; by his miracles and by his life of virtue, which shone like a light, he became known to all the inhabitants of that land. Once, when the day was already drawing toward evening, he bade the brethren cast into the garden all the spades that were to be found in the monastery. And when the brethren rose the next day for the morning prayers, the Venerable Father said: "At sunrise, prepare food for our workers." After the food had been prepared at the appointed time, St. Isaac ordered it taken, and went with the brethren to the garden. There they found as many workers as there had been spades cast in the evening. These were thieves who had entered the garden with the purpose of plunder; but, having entered it, they abandoned their evil intention, and taking up the spades that lay there, they began to work from the first hour when they had entered the garden until the time of the Venerable Father's arrival. In this time they had dug over all the untilled ground in the garden. Coming up to them, St. Isaac said: "Rejoice, brethren! Leave off your labors, for you have toiled much during the night." Giving them the food he had brought with him, he asked them to refresh themselves and rest from

their labors. When they had been satisfied, the Venerable Father addressed them with these words: "From this time forward, abandon all inclinations to the commission of evil deeds; if you need anything from the garden's produce, come in openly, ask for what you need, and take it with a blessing; give up theft." Afterwards the Venerable Father ordered that as much spring grain be gathered for them as they wished. Thus those who had entered the garden with an evil intention, which burdened their souls with sin, departed from it without sin, with a blessing, bearing a reward for their labor. At another time, some wanderers, clad in worn rags, came to St. Isaac and asked him for clothing. Bidding them wait a little, the Venerable Father summoned one of his disciples and said to him secretly: "Go into the grove beyond the monastery; there in one place is a tree with a hollow. Take the garments you find in it and bring them here." The brother went to the place indicated, and searching, indeed found the hidden garments in the hollow; taking them, he gave them to his teacher in private. Receiving the garments, the servant of God gave them to the wanderers with the words: "Since you are naked, here, take these and clothe yourselves." They took them and recognized in the garments their own, which they had purposely hidden; a great shame seized them, for, intending by deceit to obtain another's clothing, they were compelled to receive their own. It also happened that a pious man sent to the Venerable Father, by a servant, two baskets of food, asking the saint to pray for him. The servant hid one basket on the way and brought the other to the servant of God, delivering the request of the one who had sent it. Silently receiving the basket, St. Isaac then gave the servant this admonition: "I accept the gifts; but you, take care to touch with caution the basket you have hidden on the way: a serpent has crept into it, and if you, not being careful, put out your hand, it will sting you." These words greatly shamed the servant and stirred in him, on the one hand, fear, and on the other, joy at having learned of the serpent by which he might have died.

Thus St. Gregory the Dialogist relates concerning the Venerable Isaac the Syrian. There has been preserved from him a book of "ascetical words," containing very useful instructions for monks. In his life he himself was granted by God to be inscribed in the book of eternal life,

and with the host of the saints he stands before the living Word of the Father, Christ the Son of God, to Whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory forever. Amen.

* * *

Commemoration of the holy Hieromartyr Zeno, Bishop of Verona

Память святого священномученика Зинона, епископа Веронийского

St. Zeno was a Greek by birth and came from Syria. Traveling through various countries with the intention of obtaining a Christian education, he came to Italy and settled here in the city of Verona[5]. The inhabitants of that city, seeing the saint's virtuous life, chose him as their bishop.

Although the persecutions of Christians had by this time ceased, there were still everywhere a multitude of pagans, whom Zeno enlightened with the light of Christian teaching. Besides this, he had to wage a struggle against the Arians[6]. In this struggle he proved a steadfast confessor of the truths of Orthodoxy, not departing from them despite the persecutions raised against the Orthodox by the emperors who favored Arianism, Constantius[7] and Valens[8].

Having labored much for the benefit of the Church of God and having guided his flock for a sufficient time, St. Zeno departed in peace to the Lord[9].

For his great ascetic labors, St. Zeno was granted by God the gift of working miracles. St. Gregory the Great relates the following miracle, which occurred on the day of the saint's commemoration in the year 558.

5. Verona is one of the oldest cities of Italy, built in the 1st century B.C. At present Verona is a first-class Italian fortress.

6. The Arians taught that the Son of God is not equal to God the Father and is His creation. The founder of this heresy was the Alexandrian presbyter Arius. His teaching was condemned at the First Ecumenical Council, held at Nicaea in 325.

7. The Roman emperor Constantius reigned from 353 to 361.

8. Valens governed the Roman Empire from 364 to 378.

9. The death of Hieromartyr Zeno took place around 380. St. Zeno left behind certain writings: sixteen extended and seventy-seven brief exhortations, or discourses, touching upon various religious and moral questions.

In this year there was an extraordinary flood in Italy. The main river of Italy, the Tiber, overflowed its banks, so that all the surroundings of Rome were inundated with water. The river Athesis, which flowed near the city of Verona, also overflowed its banks; its waters surrounded the church built in honor of St. Zeno and, rising higher and higher, reached at last to the very windows of the church. The church doors were open, but the water did not enter the church; it stood as a kind of wall at the doors, so that many of those in the church approached the doors and quenched their thirst, scooping up the water with their hands.

Many other miracles were also wrought through the prayers of the servant of God Zeno.

* * *

Commemoration of our Venerable Father Basil the Confessor, Bishop of Parium

Память преподобного отца нашего Василия Исповедника, епископа Парийского

In Parium, an ancient city of Lesser Mysia, from the time Christianity spread there a bishop's see was established, subordinate to the metropolitan of Cyzicus. Among the bishops of Parium is numbered the Venerable Basil, chosen as bishop for his virtuous, God-pleasing life. At the rise of the iconoclastic heresy, the Venerable Basil showed himself a true confessor of Christ: avoiding all communion with the heretics, he did not allow them to act in his eparchy, and he did not agree, despite all compulsion, to sign a written decree for the destruction of the icons. For this zeal for the faith he was compelled to endure persecution and mockery at the hands of the heretics, living, like the Apostle Paul, in sorrows, afflictions and straits, constantly moving from one place to another. With his piety and his striving to guard the purity of the Church's teaching, the Venerable Basil could not but abhor the impious councils of the heretics, and therefore he did not enter into communion with them. Having been well-pleasing to the Lord by his life, the Venerable Basil departed in peace to Him.

Commemoration of the Venerable Anthusa

Память преподобной Анфусы

Her father long urged St. Anthusa to marry, but she did not consent to this; and when, after his death[10], she became free, she distributed all her property to the poor, and also to churches and monasteries. She was a mother to a multitude of orphans and a defender of widows. The pious Empress Irene[11] more than once earnestly asked her to live together with her and take part in the governance of the empire, but she firmly refused. During her stay in the palace she outwardly wore the rich garments of an imperial daughter, but beneath them a hair shirt[12]; she ate sparse food and drank only water, and her eyes were always filled with tears and her lips with church hymns. Afterwards, having received the tonsure in the Monastery of Omonoia[13] at the hand of St. Tarasius, she became a nun, and from then on she neither herself went out of the monastery nor permitted any of the sisters to do so[14]. Missing not a single church service, depriving herself of rest, she did not lose her fervor in prayer nor grow slack in the vigils of prayer, while tears of contrition always flowed from her eyes. Her humility was beyond all measure, for she served all the sisters, cleaned the church, carried water, never sat down at the table during meals, and waited upon the others.

Having passed her entire life in this manner, the Venerable Mother departed to the Lord, rich in virtues, at the age of 52 years[15].

10. The Emperor Constantine Copronymus died in 775; he had come to the throne in 743, after his son-in-law Artabasdus.
11. The Empress Irene, wife of Leo the Khazar, governed the state during the minority of her son, Constantine Porphyrogenitus, from 780 to 802. A zealous venerator of the holy icons, she contributed to the convening of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which established in the Church the dogma of the veneration of icons.
12. A hair shirt is an undergarment woven of horsehair, worn by ascetics upon the bare body.
13. The Monastery of Omonoia was located in Constantinople. It is known for the fact that the sessions of the Second Ecumenical Council took place in its church.
14. Venerable Anthusa received monastic tonsure in the Constantinopolitan Monastery of St. Euphemia, and afterwards transferred to the Monastery of Omonoia, where she was abbess.
15. Venerable Anthusa reposed on 12 April 811.

On the same day is the commemoration of the Venerable Martyrs Mina, David and John, who were pierced with arrows by the Saracens in Palestine.

* * *

ALSO COMMEMORATED THIS DAY

On the same day is the commemoration of the Venerable Martyrs Mina, David and John, who were pierced with arrows by the Saracens in Palestine.

THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF APRIL

April 13

13 апреля

New Calendar April 13 · Old Calendar April 26 (civil dates)

Suffering of the Holy Hieromartyr Artemon

Страдание святого священномученика Артемона

In the reign of Diocletian a great persecution of Christians arose[2521]: throughout all the cities and provinces of the Roman state, tormentors were dispatched to compel Christians to offer sacrifice and worship idols, and those who resisted were handed over to execution and death.

Among the others, one such emissary, named Patricius, came also into the province of Laodicea[1], and there, without delay, he set about carrying out the imperial command. Even before Patricius arrived, the Bishop of Laodicea, the Blessed Sisinius, having learned of his imminent coming, went by night, accompanied by the holy presbyter Artemon and certain Christians, into the shrine of the goddess Artemis[2], and, having first broken them, burned all the idols that stood within it. Then, returning to his Christian church, which stood at a distance of five *poprishches* from the city, he performed the customary service and addressed the faithful with this exhortation:

"My children, rumors are circulating that the Antichrist is approaching the city to slaughter Christians. Do not fear: let nothing, neither fire, nor sword, nor wild beasts, nor any other cruel form of death, cut you off from the love of Christ."

When Patricius arrived in the city, he first offered sacrifice in the shrine of Apollo; on that same day he arranged spectacles for the

1. This region is located in Asia Minor.
2. Artemis — the goddess of the hunt among the Greeks, originally, probably, a goddess of the moon.

people and proclaimed an imperial edict forbidding the confession of Christianity. After five days of diversion with spectacles and hunting, Patricius wished to offer sacrifice to Artemis, but, entering her shrine, he found there, to his astonishment, no idols.

"Where are they?" he asked.

Some of the Greeks who were standing about him answered that the statue of Artemis and the other idols had been destroyed by Bishop Sisinius, with the participation of his priest Artemon and other Christians. To Patricius's question where the bishop and the Christians now were, he was told that all the Christians had gathered in their church. Patricius at once mounted his horse and set out, accompanied by armed soldiers, for the Christian church, intending to put the Christians to death and to have Sisinius and Artemon executed by being cut into pieces. But when Patricius was already near the goal of his journey, with no more than one *poprishche* remaining to the church, suddenly he was seized by such a violent shivering that he fell from his horse; this chill was followed by excessive fever, and Patricius was forced to be carried on a litter into the first house that lay on the way. During the night, surrounded by soldiers who sat with candles awaiting the death of their commander, he said to his closest servants:

"The Christians have cursed me, and their God is tormenting me."

They answered:

"The mighty gods and the bright goddess Artemis will restore your health."

Suffering great pains and no longer expecting to remain alive, Patricius said to the soldiers:

"Go to the Christian church and say to Bishop Sisinius: thus says the imperial envoy Patricius: great is the God of the Christians! Pray to Him that I may be delivered from my grievous sickness; then I will make an image of you in gold and set it up in the midst of the city."

The soldiers went and conveyed Patricius's words to the bishop. The latter bade them give him the following reply:

"Let your gold remain with you; if you believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, you will be healed."

Patricius sent envoys to the bishop a second time, saying:

"I believe in your God, only let me be healed."

The bishop prayed for him, and at once Patricius became well, being wholly delivered from his sickness.

A few days after his recovery, Patricius set out for the Palestinian city of Caesarea. When he had gone about three *poprishches* from Laodicea, he met on the way the holy presbyter Artemon returning from prayer: he was catching wild beasts by the word of Christ, and behind him followed two deer and six wild asses. Holy Artemon was leading them to Bishop Sisinius, who very much wished to have wild beasts in his garden. Having his chariot halted, Patricius asked the servant of God Artemon:

"How did you catch these animals?"

"I caught them by the word of my Christ," he answered.

"It seems to me," Patricius asked again, "that you, old man, are a Christian?"

Holy Artemon replied:

"From my youth I have been a Christian."

Then Patricius commanded that the saint be bound with two chains and handed him over to two soldiers, that they should lead holy Artemon behind him as far as Caesarea. Unable to continue on his way, holy Artemon addressed the beasts that followed him and bade them go to Bishop Sisinius. They went and stopped at the doors of the church enclosure. The bishop asked the doorkeeper:

"Whence have these animals come?"

One of the deer, having received from God the gift of speech, said:

"The servant of God Artemon has been seized by the impious imperial envoy, and he is now being led bound to Caesarea; he sent us to you."

The bishop was astonished to hear human speech from a deer, and at the same time grieved on learning of the seizure of holy Artemon. Calling the deacon Phileas, he said to him:

"A new miracle has appeared! Of these animals you now see, one deer has told me in human speech that the servant of God Artemon has been seized by the impious Patricius and sent bound to Caesarea. I cannot restrain my horror at seeing a deer endowed with speech, nor my

sorrow at the thought of what has befallen Artemon. Take a prosphora and go with a servant to Caesarea; find out whether what the deer said is true."

The deacon took a prosphora and, having prayed, set out on the road with a servant. Arriving in Caesarea, he indeed found holy Artemon confined in prison. Warmly greeting him, he said:

"Servant of the Most High God and shepherd of the rational sheep, we would not have known how you were separated from us and fell into the hands of the tormentor, had not the deer told the bishop of it; for this reason he has sent me here to verify the truth of what it said. The bishop grieves greatly for you."

Holy Artemon answered:

"Go, servant of God, and report to my master, the holy bishop, that I have been taken for suffering for Christ and am sitting in prison; let him pray for me, that I may overcome the snares of the tormentor, who hates Christ, and thus be counted worthy to become a partaker of Christ."

Having kissed one another, they parted: the deacon returned to his own place, and holy Artemon remained in prison. When the deacon, returning, conveyed the words of holy Artemon to the bishop, the latter prayed with tears, saying:

"Lord Jesus Christ, who delivered Daniel from the mouths of the lions, who saved the three youths from the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, deliver also Thy servant Artemon from the hostile Patricius, give him strength to overcome the snares of the tormentor, and number him with the choir of holy martyrs."

One day, while spectacles were being held in Caesarea, Patricius ordered holy Artemon to be brought before him and asked him:

"Tell us, old man, what is your name?"

He answered:

"I am called the servant of Christ my God, and I am Artemon."

"Was it you who broke the image of the great goddess?" said Patricius.

"It was I," answered the saint.

"Tell me," Patricius asked again, "how did you overcome the power of the goddess and not spare her image? Why did you not fear punishment? For she has not taken your life only out of her gentleness."

"By praying to my God," replied holy Artemon, "I shall overcome even you and your tortures; how much more could I overcome a dead and mute idol."

Patricius said:

"Hearing your name, Artemon, I thought you were a servant of the goddess Artemis; I suppose she has preserved your life on account of your bearing her name."

Holy Artemon exclaimed in reply:

"Lawless, impious, and darkened in mind son of the devil, if you wish to know my name, let it be known to you that it was given to me by God while I was still in my mother's womb."

Patricius continued, admonishing him:

"Spare your old age and gray hairs; offer sacrifice to the great god Asclepius[3] in this city."

"For sixteen years," the saint answered, "I was a reader in the church of my God; for twenty-eight years I was a deacon, reading the Holy Gospel; for thirty-three years I bore the rank of presbyter, teaching and instructing people, with Christ's help, on the path of salvation; and now you demand that I, imitating you, offer sacrifice to a demon dwelling in an insensible idol. Nevertheless, I wish to see your god and to test his power."

Patricius said:

"Great power and glory belong to the god Asclepius: whoever does not offer him incense with prayer before the doors of his temple cannot enter within."

In the shrine of Asclepius there lived serpents, to which the priests once a year brought sweet food.

"Let us go to the temple of Asclepius," said holy Artemon, "and if he does not permit me to enter it, I will offer him incense."

And so, when the saint, accompanied by Patricius and the people, drew near the shrine of Asclepius, the serpents, or more precisely the

evil spirits dwelling in them, unable to bear the approach of the martyr endowed with the power of Christ, raised a terrible hissing and commotion in the shrine, so that it swayed like a tree in the wind. Seeing this, Patricius and the people fled in terror. Patricius said to the saint:

"See how great is the power of Asclepius, who admits no one to himself without first offering him incense."

"Order the priest to open the temple, that I may enter it," Artemon asked Patricius.

He commanded one of the priests to do so. The priest, named Vitalius, said, addressing Patricius:

"I report to your most illustrious authority that I cannot open the temple before I have offered incense with prayer, for great is the wrath of the god Asclepius."

Taking the censer and offering the customary incense, he opened the doors of the shrine, and himself at once ran away. Then Patricius, standing at a distance, said to the saint:

"Old man, if you can go in, then go in!"

St. Artemon approached the doors and, making the sign of the Cross, entered boldly, and the serpents became motionless. The saint then addressed the true God with this prayer:

"O Lord my God, who through Thy servant Daniel didst crush the Babylonian Bel and slay the dragon, Thou now also, by Thy power, through me a sinner, crush the heads of these serpents, that Thy holy name may be glorified!"

After this he forbade the serpents to harm anyone, and, commanding them to follow him, he went out with them. Seeing the serpents coming out of the temple, the people and Patricius were struck with terror and fled. St. Artemon cried out after them:

"Why are you running? Do not be afraid; stop and look now, as by the power of the true God in whom I believe, these serpents will die before your eyes."

3. Asclepius or Aesculapius — the god of healing.

Then he breathed upon them, and they at once became dead, falling prostrate at his feet as if struck by lightning. And St. Artemon said to Patricius:

"See how the gods you revere have died by the power of God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The people and Patricius were astonished, seeing the serpents slain without any instrument; one of them was so large that it measured five cubits across and twenty-five in length. The priest Vitalius cried out in a loud voice:

"Great is the Christian God, and great is the power of this man, who with a single breath has killed these serpents!"

Then, falling at the saint's feet, he said:

"Servant of the Most High Lord, I will not depart from you, but beg: sign me also with the power of your God, that I may become a perfect sheep of your flock; until now I have been deceived, believing in idols and these serpents, but now I know the true God."

But the impious Patricius, being blind in soul, though he had seen so great a miracle, would not come to know the true God; he supposed that St. Artemon had killed the serpents not by the power of God but by the power of sorcery. Unable to bear the shame and filled with anger at his humiliation and the slaying of the serpents, he ordered the holy martyr to be seized again and brought before his unjust tribunal for torture. There he said to the saint in wrath:

"If you do not reveal by what power you killed the serpents of the great goddess Artemis and of the radiant Apollo[4], I will hew you into pieces."

"By the power of Christ, with the assistance of the Archangel Raphael sent by God, I killed your serpents," answered St. Artemon.

"Can One crucified by the Jews have such power?" Patricius doubted.

Then the saint cried out:

"Maddened with malice, heir of hell and ancient serpent, you have heard, so hear again: by the power of my God your serpents have died."

4. Apollo — the god of the sun, patron of the arts.

After these words Patricius was filled with fury and ordered an iron griddle to be heated; then he commanded the naked martyr to be stretched upon it and pierced with red-hot iron rods, and his limbs to be cut with sharp iron; as this was done he said to St. Artemon:

"See, stubborn old man, how your body suffers from the torments."

The sufferer, raising his eyes to heaven, prayed:

"Lord Jesus Christ, do not permit the pagan to mock me, Thy servant; Thou knowest that I suffer for Thee; grant me patience to endure, that the enemy may be put to shame. Hear, O God, my prayer and receive my supplication, O Lord of Hosts! Thou hast made heaven and earth and filled the whole universe with wonders; Thou art Lord of all, and no one can withstand Thee; in Thy mercy save me, O Lord. Thou didst show the innocence of the innocent youth Abel, unlawfully slain; Thou didst reward Thy righteous Enoch, taking him up into heaven; Thou didst preserve Noah in the ark and through blessing exalted the priest Melchizedek[5]; Thou didst glorify Abraham for his sacrifice, multiplied the children of Jacob, delivered Lot from the fire of Sodom, and magnified Job for his patience. With Thy help Joseph overcame the passions of the flesh and triumphed over his enemies. Moses, Thy servant, and all the righteous, over whom Thou didst manifest Thy power showing their piety, praise Thee, the God who glorified them. And I, Lord, Thy servant, beseech Thee: have mercy on me according to Thy mercy, and help me by Thy power."

During the saint's prayer a deer ran into Caesarea; it had spoken with a bishop in Laodicea in a human voice. Coming into the square crowded with people, it fell at the honorable feet of the martyr and licked them. Then, again by God's command receiving the gift of speech to rebuke the impious man and put him to shame, it stood before Patricius and began to speak:

"Know, impious one, that nothing is impossible for God: to show His power He can grant speech even to dumb beasts. Know that the servant

of God Artemon will soon be freed from his sufferings, while you will be seized by two birds and cast into a boiling cauldron, because you inhumanly torment a righteous man and have renounced God, whom you acknowledged as true and in whom you came to believe."

Seeing in the rebuke by a wild animal nothing but sorcery, the impious Patricius flew into a rage and ordered the soldiers to kill the deer; one of them took a spear and threw it with force at the animal, but the deer leapt aside, and the spear struck one of Patricius's attendants and pierced his belly, so that he died at once. Patricius grieved for him, withdrew from the tribunal to his house, and ordered the martyr to be taken back to prison.

In the morning he ordered a large cauldron to be filled with pitch and heated, to throw the martyr into it head first. When the order had been carried out, Patricius was told that all was ready; wishing to see the execution of St. Artemon himself, he mounted his horse and rode to the cauldron, but just as he approached it, two Angels who had come down from heaven in the form of eagles seized Patricius and cast him into the boiling pitch, in which even his bones were dissolved. The soldiers and people, seeing this, fled in terror; the saint, brought to the cauldron, remained alone, glorifying God; kneeling, he prayed, and from the ground on which he stood he caused a spring to gush forth. To him came the priest Vitalius and many other pagans; taught the faith of Christ, they were all baptized by St. Artemon.

That same night the holy martyr heard a voice from on high:

"Leave the city and go to Asia, to the place known by the name of Vuli, which lies on the seashore; there you will find Alexander and his mother Pironia; with them you will deliver many from demons and heal them of diseases, and many, enlightened by you with the light of Christ's teaching, will glorify God."

5. Saint Artemon here mentions the following event of Old Testament history. When Abraham was returning after his victory over the kings who had taken captive his kinsman Lot, Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High, went out to meet him with bread and wine and blessed Abraham (Gen. 14:1–20; Heb. 7:1); in this blessing was expressed the higher dignity of Melchizedek before Abraham, for, as Saint Paul the Apostle says: "Without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better" (Heb. 7:7).

At the coming of morning all the newly converted gathered to the saint; he, taking the Divine Mysteries, gave them the honorable Body and honorable Blood of Christ, saying:

"This bread is the Body of Christ, and this cup is the Blood of Christ, shed for your souls; take heed, children, that none of you fall away from the love of Christ; remain steadfast in the faith, while I am commanded to go to Asia."

The bishop of Caesarea, hearing of all that had happened to St. Artemon and learning that he had baptized many and was teaching, preaching the Gospel, came to him with Christians and greeted him with a kiss; then, offering a prayer, he marked the place where the martyr had suffered, and afterward built a church there; of those baptized by St. Artemon he ordained some as presbyters, others as deacons, and appointed Vitalius bishop, placing under him the region of Palestine. St. Artemon, taking leave of the bishop and the people, set out for the land of Asia appointed to him; on the way he was caught up by an Angel and set in the place that had been revealed in a vision; here, with God's help, he worked many great miracles and converted many to the Lord, teaching them the truth of the Gospel. During his preaching St. Artemon was seized by pagans and, beheaded by the sword, departed to the eternal mansions to receive the crown from Christ our God, to Whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory and worship unto ages of ages. Amen.

* * *

Memory of the Holy Martyr Thomais

Память святой мученицы Фомаиды

The holy martyr Thomais was born in the city of Alexandria to pious parents, who gave their daughter a truly Christian upbringing and taught her to read books. In her fifteenth year they gave her in marriage to a young Christian man. In the house of her husband St. Thomais lived honorably, respected by all for her chastity, meekness, guilelessness and other good qualities of character. Under the same roof with them lived also the father of her husband, St. Thomais's fath-

er-in-law. Captivated by the beauty of his daughter-in-law and inflamed with carnal desire, he, by the working of Satan, devised evil against her: he sought a convenient time for sinful intercourse with her, and, not finding one, contented himself with embracing and kissing her daily under the guise of fatherly affection. St. Thomais, however, in her chastity did not suppose that her father-in-law had impure thoughts, and so she found nothing objectionable in such treatment from him: she was convinced that it sprang from his love for her as a daughter, and, honoring her father-in-law as a father, she conducted herself toward him with especially strict modesty.

St. Thomais's husband was a fisherman, and one night his fellow fishermen came and took him away with them to fish. Taking advantage of his son's absence, the father came to St. Thomais and began to persuade her to sin. Such an unexpected danger filled her with terror, and she began to resist the frenzied old man, saying:

"What are you doing, Father? Make the sign of the Cross and go away: your design is inspired in you by Satan."

But the elder would not heed her admonitions, and he sought to win her over by shameless words and deeds. Saint Thomais, filled with the fear of God and chastity, offered him firm resistance: she begged and urged him to abandon his lawless and impious desire. But the more she withstood him, the more insistently he pressed her, kindled with unclean lust as with fire. Above the bed a sword hung on the wall; taking it down and drawing it from its scabbard, the elder began to terrify Saint Thomais, addressing her with these threats:

"If you do not obey me, I will cut off your head with this very sword."

She answered:

"Even if you cut me into pieces, I will never consent to such a lawless deed."

The elder, falling into a violent rage at these words, struck his daughter-in-law with such force that he killed her, cleaving her in two. The blessed Thomais committed her soul into the hands of God and received the glorious crown of martyrdom for her purity and chastity: she struggled against sin unto the shedding of her own blood, and laid

down her soul for the law of God, choosing rather to die than to anger God and defile her body and her husband's bed.

The murderer was at once overtaken by the punishment of God: blinded in soul, he lost his sight and, casting down the sword, sought the doors, wishing to leave the house and flee unseen; but, feeling along the walls, he could not find the way out and was therefore compelled to remain in the room. Meanwhile other fishermen came and, knocking, called his son to go fishing. The father answered:

"My son has already gone to fish; show me the doors, for I cannot find them."

They opened the door, entered, and saw the elder with bloodied hands and garments, trying by touch to find the way out, and the wife lying in blood on the ground, cut in two. Horrified at this sight, they asked:

"What does this mean? Who committed such a crime, and why?"

Then the elder told them of his sin and asked that he be taken to the judge, so as to receive the punishment his deeds deserved. When the husband of Saint Thomais returned from work and learned what had happened, he was overcome with inconsolable grief and shame: he mourned his chaste wife and was ashamed of his lawless father, who, not fearing God, had committed a vile crime and covered his gray hairs with disgrace. The elder was brought to trial and punished by the sword. And a multitude of people from the inhabitants of Alexandria gathered at the body of the slain woman; all of them marveled at this incredible and dreadful event and glorified the chastity of Saint Thomais.

At that time, by chance, Venerable Daniel of Skete was in Alexandria; he said to his disciple:

"My son, let us go and see the holy maiden."

Having fulfilled their desire, they went to the Octodecatos monastery, that is, the Eightieth. The monks of this monastery received the venerable father with honor, greeting him sincerely. After telling them of the sufferings of Saint Thomais, he gave them this command:

"Go and bring here her honorable body, for it should not lie among worldly people, but among honorable fathers."

Some of the brethren were indignant at the command to lay the body of a woman among the fathers. The venerable one said to them in reply:

"The maiden whom you are unwilling to bring here is a mother to me and to you, for she died for her chastity."

Then the monks no longer dared to oppose the holy father; they went, took the body of Saint Thomais, and buried it with honor in the monastery's burial vault. After taking leave of all the fathers, the venerable one withdrew with his disciple to his skete.

A certain brother in his monastery suffered strong assaults of carnal temptation; coming to Venerable Daniel, he opened to him his fierce struggle with the passions of the flesh. The venerable one said to him:

"Go to the Octodecatos monastery and pray there in the monastery's burial vault in this way: O God, by the prayers of the martyr Thomais, help me and deliver me from licentious lust! Trust in God, and you will be delivered from temptations," the venerable father added.

The brother went and carried out exactly all that Venerable Daniel had told him, and indeed was completely freed from carnal temptations. Returning to the skete, he fell at the feet of Venerable Daniel and said to him:

"By the prayers of the holy martyr Thomais and by yours, Father, God has delivered me from licentious lusts."

The elder asked:

"In what manner were you freed from them?"

The brother answered:

"Having said twelve prayers and anointed myself with oil from the lamp that stands by the tomb of the holy martyr, I laid my head on her tomb and fell asleep, and there appeared to me a radiant maiden, Saint Thomais, who said: 'Father, receive this blessing and go in peace to your cell.' I received the blessing and awoke, feeling wholly freed from carnal passion; I do not know exactly what the blessing of the saint given to me in the dream means, but I am well aware of my deliverance from the passions."

When the brother had finished his account, Venerable Daniel said:

"Such great boldness before God have those who labor for chastity."

For the rest of his life the brother never again suffered temptations from the flesh, and he glorified God and the holy martyr Thomais, his healer. So did others who were troubled by similar passions: coming to the tomb of the holy martyr Thomais, they received relief and deliverance from carnal passions through her holy prayers; they glorified the holy martyr, and at the same time glorified Christ the Lord, to Whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be honor and worship forever. Amen.

Passion of the Holy Martyr Crescens

Страдание святого мученика Крискента

This holy martyr was born in the city of Myra in Lycia,[6] was of a noble family, and was a man of great renown. Seeing many worship idols, he once entered the crowd of idol-worshippers and began to persuade them to abandon their pagan errors, turn to Christ, and be saved. When the governor of the province learned of this, he ordered him seized and brought before him for judgment. At the trial he asked the saint what his father's name was and what his own name was, but Crescens called himself only a Christian and answered nothing else. Then the governor said to him:

"Offer sacrifice to the idols only for appearance's sake, and in your soul remain a worshipper of your God."

But the holy martyr rejected such a proposal with indignation, and, confessing the truth before all, answered the governor:

"It is impossible for the body to do other than what the soul thinks, since the soul governs and moves the body."

After this Saint Crescens was hanged, his body was scraped, and then they lit a furnace and, when it was heated, threw him into it. Thus he gave up his spirit to the Lord.

* * *

6. Myra, now Demre, among the Turks Dembre, was the chief city of ancient Lycia and lay near the sea, on the river Andrakas.

NOTES

2521. In the reign of Diocletian (284–305) four edicts were issued against the Christians. The first was promulgated in February 303. This edict prescribed the destruction of churches and the burning of the holy books; at the same time Christians lost their civil rights, honor, the protection of the laws, and their offices; Christian slaves lost the right to freedom if, having received it on some occasion, they remained in Christianity. Soon a second edict was issued, ordering that all heads of churches and other clergy be cast into prison; thus this edict concerned only the clergy, who were accused before the emperor as instigators of the uprising in Syria and Armenia, which, to the misfortune of the Christians, began after the appearance of the first edict. In the same year 303 a third edict followed: all those imprisoned under the second edict were to be compelled to offer sacrifices, under threat of torture for resistance. Finally, in 304 the last, fourth edict was promulgated, by which a general persecution of Christians was declared; the "great persecution" spoken of in this Life obviously refers to the persecution that followed the fourth edict. More Christian blood was shed because of this edict than any other: it operated for a full 8 years, until 311, when Emperor Galerius, by a special edict, declared Christianity a permitted religion. The persecution of Diocletian was the last; in it Christianity, after nearly three centuries of struggle, won its final victory over paganism.

THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF APRIL

April 14

14 апреля

New Calendar April 14 · Old Calendar April 27 (civil dates)

Passion of Our Holy Father Martin the Confessor, Pope of Rome

Страдание во святых отца нашего Мартина Исповедника, папы Римского

After the death of Theodore, Pope of Rome, in 649, the blessed Martin[1] took his place by unanimous election. At that time, Constans[2], son of Emperor Constantine and grandson of Heraclius, reigned in Greece in the East; in those years the Greek emperors still possessed ancient Rome and therefore had their own governors in the western part of the empire. In the East the heresy of the Monothelites, that is, the adherents of one will, who acknowledged one will and one volition in our Lord Jesus Christ,[2530] was spreading ever more widely. This heresy arose from the earlier heresy of Eutyches, who blasphemously asserted that there was only one nature in Christ Jesus, contrary to the Orthodox teaching which confesses two natures and two wills, two volitions and operations, in our incarnate Lord Jesus Christ; each nature has its own will, its own volition, and its own operation in the one Person of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ cannot be divided into two persons, but is known in two natures without their being mingled.

The patriarchs were the founders of the heresy: Cyrus of Alexandria and Sergius of Constantinople; Heraclius, the grandfather of Emperor Constans, also aided them in spreading it. After the death of Sergius, Pyrrhus was made Patriarch of Constantinople, and after him Paul—both heretical Monothelites. At Paul's counsel, Emperor Constans wrote a little book containing the heretical teaching of the

1. This was in 649.
2. From 642 to 668.

Monothelites, which he named the "Typos"; he sent it everywhere, commanding that its teaching concerning the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ be held. Many of the Orthodox who did not share the heresy suffered exile, beatings, or even death for resisting the emperor's impious command. Among them were the Venerable Maximus the Confessor, as is set forth in detail in his Life,[3] and St. Pope Martin, of whom we now speak. As soon as he had taken the throne of the Pope of Rome, the emperor sent him a book filled with heretical teaching, wishing the newly appointed pope to agree with his heresy and confirm it at a council. But the blessed Martin rejected it, saying:

"Even if the whole world were to accept this teaching, which is contrary to Orthodoxy, even then I would not accept it; and even were I to suffer death, I would not depart from the teaching of the Gospel and the Apostles, nor from the tradition of the holy Fathers."

Then he sent a letter to Paul, Patriarch of Constantinople, by the hands of certain worthy men from among the clergy, lovingly exhorting him not to sow discord in the unity of the Church, nor to sow the tares of heresy among the wheat of the faith, but rather to persuade the emperor to abandon the teaching opposed to the Church. But Patriarch Paul not only refused to heed the blessed Martin; he also had his envoys shamefully beaten and sent into exile on the borders of the empire. Then St. Martin, following the counsel of the Venerable Maximus, abbot[4] of Chrysopolis, who was then in Rome, assembled a local council of one hundred and five western bishops and submitted for its consideration the errors of Cyrus, Sergius, Pyrrhus, and Paul, together with the emperor's book, the "Typos." The council anathematized the heresy and issued an epistle to all the Orthodox, confirming them in Orthodoxy, explaining the utter ruinousness of the heresy, and commanding them to beware of it most carefully.[5] When the emperor heard of this action by St. Martin, he was seized with the greatest anger. He sent to Rome as his governor a certain military commander named Olympius,

3. His memory is on January 21.
4. Father, a Hebrew word.
5. This council took place in the year of St. Martin's accession to the papal throne, that is, in 649.

to seize Pope Martin. But when Olympius arrived in Rome, he was forced to abandon the thought of openly seizing the pope, for he found the aforementioned council still in session, with a great multitude of bishops and people gathered, so that the city was full of clergy and laity. Therefore Olympius persuaded a soldier to kill St. Martin in the church, as if by accident. But when the soldier, with a sharp sword hidden beneath his clothing, approached the pope in the church, intending to kill him, he suddenly and unexpectedly became blind; for the Lord, who does not suffer "the rod of the wicked to rest upon the lot of the righteous"[6] (Ps. 124:3), did not allow the murderer to raise his murderous hand against His faithful servant. Seeing that the Lord Himself guarded His servant, Olympius left the pope in peace and departed for Sicily, where he died in battle against the Saracens. The emperor, following the prompting of Patriarch Paul, sent another governor to Rome, also a military commander, named Theodore and surnamed Calliopas. He was charged with seizing St. Martin, first falsely accusing the pope of wishing to wage war against the emperor, of keeping in contact with the Saracens and urging them to revolt, and of wrongly keeping the faith handed down by the Fathers and blaspheming the Most Pure Theotokos.

Having reached Rome, the governor openly accused the pope before everyone of the aforementioned crimes. St. Martin, who was guilty of nothing, began to defend himself against the slander laid upon him:

"Never," he said, "have I had any dealings with the Saracens, except when I sent alms to the poor and needy brethren in the faith who live among them. But whoever does not honor the Most Pure Theotokos, does not acknowledge her as the Mother of God, and does not venerate her, let him be accursed in this age and in the age to come. As for the holy faith," he concluded his defense, "it is not we, but those who unjustly disagree with us, who keep it wrongly."

But the emperor's governor, paying no heed to the pope's defense, continued to insist that the accusations he had made were true, and even added a new one: that St. Martin had supposedly wrongfully occu-

6. That is, the Lord, while permitting the temporary triumph of the impious over the righteous, always grants the final victory to the pious.

pied the papal throne. Then one night, secretly, with the aid of soldiers, he seized the pope, brought him down to the harbor, and sent him from there by boat to the island of Naxos, one of the distant islands known as the Cyclades.[7] St. Martin remained on this island for a whole year, suffering hunger and other privations, even of life's bare necessities. Whenever a pious islander, taking pity on the exiled pope, brought him something to ease his need, the guards would not let the visitor reach the prisoner, but forcibly took the gifts for themselves. At the same time they rebuked those who had brought them, saying:

"If any of you love him and pity him, he is an enemy of his homeland, for the exile is a heretic, an opponent of God, and a rebel against the Greco-Roman state."

The guards inflicted many insults upon St. Martin, reviling and mocking him. Though his bodily strength failed under the daily insults, privations, and the illness that had come upon him, he nevertheless did not lose his firmness of soul, but bore everything with thanksgiving for God's sake. When a year had passed since his arrival on the island, St. Martin was taken to Byzantium.[8]

The ship reached Byzantium in autumn and early in the morning stopped at the harbor of Euthymius, near Archandia. At once, the emperor's and the patriarch's envoys began to torment the saint, who was already gravely ill; utterly devoid of compassion, they spent the whole day, from morning until evening, dishonoring so worthy a bishop of God, reviling and abusing him in every way. At evening, the patriarch's notary[9] Sagoliva arrived with a great number of soldiers. Taking St. Martin from the ship, they laid him on a litter (for because of his illness he could no longer walk) and carried him to a courtyard called Prandiaria. There they locked St. Martin in a dark and narrow room and kept careful watch, taking care that no one among the city's inhabitants should learn where he was staying. The saint remained in this prison for ninety-three days, unable to speak with anyone. Then St. Martin was carried to the house of the sakellarios,[10] where the senators[11] had

7. These islands, numbering 60, are located in the Aegean Sea.
8. The present-day Constantinople.
9. The patriarch's secretary.

gathered. When he was brought in, one of the eldest senators shouted, ordering St. Martin to rise from the litter on which he had been carried into the assembly. One of the servants who bore him said that the pope could not rise, for he was gravely ill; but the senator, paying no heed to St. Martin's illness, angrily ordered him once more to stand, commanding that he be supported because of his weakness. Then St. Martin rose and stood in the midst, supported on either side. The false witnesses, who had been summoned beforehand and coached for the purpose, also stood up, laying against St. Martin the unjust accusations already described and adding others as well; to prove their words true, they swore by the holy Gospel. When St. Martin, who did not know how to speak Greek, began to defend himself through an interpreter, the assembly not only refused to listen to him but expressly forbade him to speak; and they reviled the interpreter with insulting words. Seeing this, St. Martin said:

"The Lord knows how great a kindness you will do me if you soon put me to death by some means of execution."

After this, the saint was led out and, since he could not stand, seated upon a raised platform specially prepared for such occasions, in the square where great numbers of people commonly gathered. The emperor watched him secretly from an upper room in his palace and sent the sakellarios to him. The latter approached St. Martin and said to him threateningly:

"Behold, you have forsaken God, and God has forsaken you." Having said this, he turned to the people and ordered them to curse St. Martin; and the crowd surrounding him began to cry aloud:

"Anathema to Pope Martin!"

Those among the bystanders who knew the pope's perfect innocence departed from this spectacle with sorrowful faces and eyes full of tears. After this the sacellarius said to the prefect of the praetorium[12]:

"Take him and cut him in pieces, for he is not worthy of life."

10. The sakellarios was the highest church dignitary, standing at the head of a special council that governed the Constantinopolitan monasteries, managed the monastic economy, and supervised the life of the monks.

11. A senator was the highest state dignitary.

Immediately the speculators[13] seized the saint, stripped off his outer garment, and tore his undergarment in two. They put heavy iron chains around the neck and whole body of St. Martin and dragged him through the entire city to the praetorium, carrying before him the naked sword with which they intended to kill him. Some of the people reviled the saint and, mocking him, said as they shook their heads:

"Where is his God? Where is the doctrine he upheld?"

Others, however, could not restrain their weeping and lamentation at the sight of such dishonor and torment inflicted upon God's Hierarch. And the Venerable one suffered a double affliction: he suffered in body from his illness, the heavy chains, and the blows of his tormentors as they dragged him along; at the same time, he suffered in soul from being stripped and subjected to dishonorable mockery, enduring shame and anguish of heart. When they came to the praetorium, the speculators dragged the bound saint up the stairs to the prison. St. Martin stumbled on the last step and fell, bruising himself, until his body was covered with bruises and abrasions. There they cast him in with criminals and robbers. After some time he was transferred from there to another prison, the prison of Diomedes, where he nearly died from illness and severe cold (it was the month of January). The wife of one of the prison guards took pity on St. Martin. Coming secretly to the holy prisoner, she took him to her own house, bound his wounds, laid him on her bed, and covered him with a warm blanket. St. Martin lay there until evening, making no sound, like a dead man. Late in the evening, Gregory, chief of the imperial eunuchs,[14] sent the steward of his household with a little food and told him to give it to St. Martin, saying:

12. The praetorium was an administrative place where judicial cases were mainly decided and the decisions carried into effect. The praetor was the highest judge in ancient Rome; later the circle of his duties was widened.

13. The speculator was the praetor's assistant and executor of his orders.

14. A eunuch was a castrated servant entrusted with supervision of the wives; the custom of keeping such servants for this purpose first arose in Asia Minor; eunuchs are known in ancient Rome. In Byzantium, whose court life took shape under Eastern influence, there were likewise eunuchs; placed in a position to act upon the rulers through their wives, the eunuchs sometimes acquired a strong influence over the course of state affairs, and therefore the office of chief of the eunuchs was an honored one.

"Do not lose heart in your sorrow; we hope that God will not allow you to die."

Hearing this, the Venerable Martin sighed from the depths of his heart, for the wish did not accord with his own desire: suffering for his Orthodoxy, St. Martin wished rather to die. At once the chains were removed from the Venerable one.

In the morning the emperor went to visit the mortally ill Patriarch Paul and told him all that had happened to Pope Martin. Paul turned toward the wall and, sighing heavily, said:

"Woe is me, and here is yet another deed to my condemnation."

The emperor asked:

"What does this mean?"

"Is it a small crime, O sovereign," Paul replied, "to make the pope endure such sufferings?"

And he entreated the emperor, adjuring him to put an end to any further abuse of the pope. Eight days later, after Paul's death, the emperor sent to St. Martin in the prison of Diomedes the notary Demosthenes, accompanied by other men specially appointed for the task. Entering the prison, they said:

"Our emperor says to you: behold, after such glory you find yourself in such dishonor, but no one is to blame for this except yourself."

St. Martin made no reply to them, but, lifting his eyes to heaven, said: "Thanks and glory for all things to the only immortal King."

The envoys questioned St. Martin about Paul's predecessor, Patriarch Pyrrhus: whether he had come to Rome of his own will and there renounced the Monothelite heresy, and how Pope Theodore, after whom St. Martin had occupied the throne, had received him into communion with the Church. St. Martin told them in detail about Patriarch Pyrrhus: how he had come to Rome of his own will and submitted a written renunciation of his heresy, to which, however, he later returned; and how Pope Theodore had received him with the honor due to his episcopal rank, providing him with the means of subsistence. St. Martin concluded his speech with this address to the emperor's envoys:

"I am in your hands; do with me as you wish and as God permits you. But be assured that even if you were to cut me in pieces, I would

still not enter into communion with the Church of Constantinople until it abandons its heretical error. Put my words to the test, and you will see how great is the grace of the Lord in His servants."

Having heard St. Martin's reply, the embassy returned to the emperor, marveling at the saint's greatness and strength of soul, and at his fearlessness in the face of torments and death itself. Eighty-five days later the notary Sagoliva came to St. Martin in prison and said to him: "I have been ordered to take you from here to my house, from where you will be sent to a certain place."

St. Martin asked:

"Where will they send me, and to what place in particular?"

But Sagoliva did not answer his question. Then St. Martin said:

"Leave me in prison until the time comes to send me."

The notary departed. At sunset the pope said to the prisoners who were with him:

"Come, brethren, and let us give one another a final kiss; a messenger will come at once to take me from here."

They all took leave of him with tears, but St. Martin, showing joy in his face, said to them:

"Do not weep, but rejoice: you see that I rejoice, for I am going to suffer for Orthodoxy."

After this the notary mentioned above came again and took the saint from the prison. All who were present wept inconsolably, sorrowing at their separation from the Venerable one. St. Martin was placed aboard a ship and sent into exile in Cherson[15]. There he was starved and deprived of all necessities, so that after two years he departed to the Lord.[16] His honorable body was buried outside the city of Cherson, in the church of the Most Holy Theotokos, called Blachernae. Soon his tomb began to draw great numbers of people: the sick received all manner of healings in abundance through the prayers of the saint and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory forever. Amen.

15. A cape on the western shore of the Crimea; here, in the fifth century B.C., stood Chersonesus; a few versts from Sevastopol the ruins of this city can be seen.
16. In 655.

* * *

Passion of the Holy Lithuanian Martyrs Anthony, John, and Eustathius

Страдание святых мучеников литовских Антония, Иоанна и Евстафия

These holy Martyrs came from the Lithuanian city of Vilna[17] and, according to the impious custom of that time, were fire-worshippers,[18] like the other inhabitants of that land. Anthony and John, brothers by birth, loved the Christian faith with all their souls, and when a certain priest named Nestor once came to Lithuania, they received Holy Baptism from him. The elder brother was given the name John, and the younger, Anthony.[19] After their baptism both brothers led lives befitting true Christians.

While serving the Lithuanian prince Olgerd,[20] Anthony and John tried to conceal their Christianity from him, but could not succeed, because their Christian customs and conduct set them too clearly apart from the pagans. Thus, unlike the others, they would neither cut the hair of their heads and beards as the pagans did, nor eat non-Lenten food on fast days; nor did they observe other impious customs contrary to Christianity. And when the prince once asked them why they did not follow the ancient Lithuanian customs, the saints fearlessly confessed themselves to be Christians.

The prince began to compel them to renounce the Christian faith and to eat the meat dishes served at table. But they, firmly holding to

17. The city of Vilna was founded in the twelfth century, though according to other reports even in the tenth. But it becomes historically known only at the beginning of the fourteenth century (c. 1323), as the capital of the Grand Prince of Lithuania and Rus, Gediminas. At present Vilna is a large provincial city of about a hundred thousand inhabitants, belonging to Russia.

18. Fire-worship, generally widespread in antiquity, also took place in pagan Lithuania. It consisted chiefly in the worship of the god of fire, thunder and lightning, Perun, in whose honor a fairly large temple was built in Vilna in 1285.

19. Before accepting Christianity, Anthony and John bore pagan names: Nezhilo and Kumets.

20. Olgerd, Prince of Lithuania, reigned from 1341 to 1377. Shortly before coming to the throne, Olgerd accepted Christianity, but he did so from worldly calculation, desiring to gain possession of the principality of Vitebsk, which belonged to the Russian princess Maria Yaroslavna, whom Olgerd married for this purpose. When his wife, a Christian, died (this was about 1346), Olgerd abandoned Christianity and again became a pagan.

the Christian faith, would not eat meat, since it was a fast day. Then the prince ordered them to be cast into a dark prison. The saints went there with joy, as though they were going not to prison but to a royal throne, praising and thanking God for deeming them worthy to suffer for His holy name.

After the saints had been in prison for a whole year, John, worn down by his imprisonment and fearing torture, sent a request to the prince to release him, promising to obey all the prince's commands. The prince was pleased and ordered both brothers to be released, appointing them among the foremost men at his court.

Outwardly John resembled the impious, observing all their customs and acting according to the will of their prince; but in his heart he kept the Christian faith, secretly praying to Christ God, whom he did not dare confess openly for fear of torture. Anthony, however, made no change at all in his Christian customs, but openly conducted himself as a true Christian ought. He reproached his brother John for his faint-heartedness and fear, and urged him in every way to repent and, without fearing torture, to confess Christ openly once more. The pagans, seeing that the elder brother John obeyed the prince in everything, paid no attention to the younger brother Anthony.

One day, when the brothers John and Anthony were with the prince as usual, John ate some of the meat dishes set before him, although it was a fast day; but blessed Anthony would not eat this food, openly confessing himself to be a Christian. Then, at the prince's command, Anthony was imprisoned once more. John, meanwhile, was despised by everyone: the Christians did not love him, as an apostate, while the pagans reproached him as a fickle man who had kept neither his old pagan faith nor the new Christian faith to which he had passed, forsaking paganism.

Recognizing his great sin, John began with tears to repent of his fall. He went to the priest Nestor mentioned above and begged him to intercede for him with his brother, that Anthony might forgive his sin and receive him into communion with himself. When the priest conveyed his brother's request, Anthony gave this answer:

I can have fellowship with my brother only if he openly confesses Christ and the Christian faith. When he does so, then we shall have everything in common.

John repented and accepted his brother's words with love. Now he began to look for a convenient time when he might openly confess his Christian faith.

It happened once that the prince was bathing, and John attended him. Seeing that the time was convenient, John boldly and without fear confessed himself a Christian before the prince. But the prince did not yet show his anger toward John and did nothing to him, because there was no one else in the bath besides them.

Then John, some time later, in the presence of the prince's numerous nobles, loudly declared himself a Christian. Immediately, at the prince's command, he was seized and beaten without mercy with various instruments and by the hands of all who were present; this beating continued for no small time, after which the saint was cast into prison.

Learning of what had happened, the blessed Antony was filled with great joy. The two brothers were again together in prison, glorifying God; there they were also granted to partake of the Most Holy and Life-giving Mysteries of Christ from the above-named priest.

After some years had passed, the holy martyr Antony was condemned to a shameful death, as though he were a criminal: he was sentenced to be hanged from a tree. When on the eve of his execution he was informed of this, he spent the whole night before his death without sleep, glorifying God in prayer and strengthening his brother to bear sufferings for Christ without fear. Antony exhorted his brother not to fall away from the faith again, and prophetically foretold him a speedy death.

"After my repose," he said, "you too, brother, will, a little while later, go to Christ by the same kind of death."

When morning came, both brothers partook of the Divine, Life-giving Body and Blood of Christ; and about noon the holy martyr of Christ Antony was led out of prison and, by the prince's command, was hanged from a tree, on the fourteenth day of January. Thus the invin-

cible warrior of Christ gave up his holy and blameless soul into the hands of Christ his God, whom he had loved with all his heart.

The holy martyr John was left in prison, for the impious hoped to tempt him again and turn him away from confessing the Christian faith. But when they saw that he steadfastly kept the holy faith and boldly confessed Christ even in prison, they condemned him also to the same death by which his brother had died. After some time the pagans put him to death (by strangling), and his body was hanged on the same tree on which his brother had been hanged. This took place in the month of April, on the twenty-fourth day. Thus this passion-bearer too, having completed his martyr's struggle, departed to Christ the Author of the struggle, for whose sake he had accepted a martyr's death. The holy bodies of Antony and John were buried with honor by the faithful and laid in one place.

Some time after the repose of the holy martyrs Antony and John, the blessed Eustathius also suffered. Although he was young in years, he surpassed many in courage and valor. Being beautiful of face, he was even more beautiful in soul and mind. Having come to know the True God, Eustathius rejected pagan godlessness and, loving Christ, came to the above-named presbyter Nestor. Taught the holy faith by him, Eustathius received Divine baptism.[21]

Having become a Christian, Eustathius led a God-pleasing life, as befits a true Christian: he spent all his time in fasting, prayer, and good works.

This Eustathius also served in the service of Prince Olgerd. Once Olgerd was examining and deciding the affairs of his principality, and Eustathius, as was required by his office, stood before him. Looking at Eustathius, the prince saw that he had long hair on his head. (It should be noted that those pagans who offered divine worship to fire had a custom of cutting the hair of the head and beard especially often; the blessed Eustathius, however, since he had renounced their impious and senseless faith and had accepted baptism, wore long hair on his head.) The prince asked him whether he was not a Christian. When Eustathi-

21. The holy martyr Eustathius was a kinsman of Sts. Anthony and John, and before accepting Christianity bore the pagan name Kruvlets.

us in reply openly confessed himself a Christian, the prince grew very angry, and, wishing to turn Eustathius away from the faith of Christ, began to compel him to eat meat. The saint not only did not eat what was offered, but would not even look at the meat, since it was then the fast before the feast of the Nativity of Christ and, moreover, it was Friday.[22]

Then the prince became even more furious and commanded that the holy youth be beaten without mercy with iron rods. The saint bore these torments so courageously that he not only did not cry out, but did not even utter a single groan, and not one tear rolled from his eyes; he only thanked God that He had granted him to suffer for His holy name.

Such courageous and patient endurance of suffering by the saint again brought the prince to the greatest anger, and he commanded that the coldest water be poured into the martyr's mouth (it was then a harsh winter), so that his body turned blue from the intense cold. Nevertheless the saint did not obey the prince's command and did not taste the meat. Then the prince commanded that the martyr be subjected to still greater torments: the bones of his feet and shins were broken and crushed; his hair was torn from his head together with the skin, and his nose and ears were cut off.

So they tormented the saint for three days, yet he seemed to feel no pain, did not groan, and not the slightest sign of suffering appeared on his face; all the while he spoke lovingly with the Christians, who wept at the sight of his sufferings, and said to them:

"Do not weep for me, brothers, seeing that my earthly body is being broken amid torments, for I hope to receive from Christ the Lord our God a body not made by hands, abiding eternally in the heavens."

Meanwhile the prince, seeing that he could achieve nothing by torments, condemned the martyr to death and commanded that he be hanged on the same tree on which the two above-named holy martyrs, Antony and John, had been hanged in that same year. The servants took the holy Eustathius, now barely alive, and led him to death. The holy martyr Eustathius, although his thighs, feet, and knees had been

22. Friday (and Wednesday), as the day dedicated by the holy Church to the remembrance of the Lord's sufferings on the Cross, according to the church rule must be a day of fasting.

broken, strengthened by God's help, walked as though completely healthy, briskly and quickly, not only not falling behind those who led him, but even outstripping them.

When all had come near the above-named tree, the tormentor's servants wrapped a rope around the saint's neck and hanged him. Thus this sufferer for Christ also gave up his holy soul into the hands of God, on the thirteenth day of December.[23] His honorable body was left hanging on the tree close to the ground, so that wild beasts and birds of prey might devour it, but no beast and no bird approached the body, for God guarded it. And three days later it was taken whole by the faithful and with honor committed to burial, not far from the place where the two holy martyrs mentioned above had earlier been buried.

It is worth noting that after the repose of the saints, none of the criminals condemned to death was hanged on that tree or buried near it (since God always glorifies His martyrs). Although this place had been designated for executions and all those sentenced to execution died there, yet after the suffering and death of the saints not one criminal was executed in that place.

Some years later, when the number of Christians in that city had increased, and the holy faith grew and strengthened day by day, the faithful gathered together and, coming to the prince, asked him to give them the place where the three above-named holy martyrs had received their blessed end. The prince, by God's providence, consented to the Christians' request and gave them the place they asked for. The Christians, having felled that tree, built on its site a church in the name of the Most Holy Trinity, to the honor and glory of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,[24] and they set the Holy Table in the very place where the tree had grown. Into this church were brought the relics of the holy martyrs of Christ, Antony, John, and Eustathius, to the glorification of God, who is glorified in the Holy Trinity, to whom belong all glory, honor, and worship, now and forever, unto ages of ages. Amen.

23. The repose of St. Eustathius, and of the aforementioned Anthony and John, followed in 1347.

24. The relics of the holy martyrs at present rest in the Holy Spirit Monastery of Vilna, to which they were translated in 1826.

* * *

Suffering of the Holy Martyr Ardalion

Страдание святого мученика Ардалиона

The holy martyr Ardalion suffered in the reign of the emperor Maximian.[25] Being a mime actor, he at public spectacles and in other places represented suffering and various actions of people. It happened once that he represented the torment of Christians as it actually occurred. He was hanged, and they began to scrape his body as though because he would not offer sacrifice to the idols. When among those present at this spectacle cries of approval arose and praises of his art were heard, he turned to the spectators and in a loud voice commanded them to be silent and wait before expressing their approval; then, when all had fallen silent, he openly declared himself to be in truth a Christian. The governor of the city who was present at the spectacle praised his art for a long time, wishing thereby to make him change his decision. But the saint refused to do so and resolved to remain in the true faith. Then the governor commanded that an iron pan be heated and that Saint Ardalion be thrown onto it. Thus the holy martyr died.

* * *

Suffering of a Thousand Holy Martyrs and Azat

Страдание тысячи святых мучеников и Азата

The saving day of the holy and Great Friday had come, when Christians, celebrating, glorified and gave thanks to Christ, who for our sake endured redemptive sufferings. On this day Bishop Simeon was seized and put to death. After this, beginning on the day of Great Friday, for ten days they began seizing and putting all the Christians to death[26]. At that same time there were also seized these holy martyrs, a thousand persons in number, and together with them the eu-

25. Here one must understand Maximian Galerius, who first co-reigned with Diocletian and then, from 305 to 311, was his successor. The persecution of Christians under Diocletian's edict began in 303.

nuch[27] Azat, who held a high position at the royal court and enjoyed the particular love and esteem of King Sapor. Under interrogation they all boldly confessed their faith in Christ, and at once all were executed for it[28]. Sapor was greatly grieved by the death of St. Azat. After his repose he issued an edict forbidding the putting of Christians to death, and this edict remained in force for some time[29].

* * *

NOTES

2530. The Monophysites, or Single-Natured, were heretics who taught of one Divine nature in the Lord Jesus Christ, namely of the complete fusion in Jesus Christ of the Divine and human natures, with the latter swallowed up by the former; this heresy is otherwise called Eutychianism, after the Constantinopolitan archimandrite Eutyches, who first proclaimed this teaching and began the Monophysite disputes. This heresy was first condemned at a local Council of Constantinople (448), at which Eutyches was deposed; the Patriarch of Constantinople Flavian, who presided at the council, reported its decisions to the Roman pope, St. Leo the Great. The latter agreed to the condemnation of Eutyches and wrote an epistle in which he set forth the Orthodox teaching on the union of two natures in Jesus Christ. Meanwhile Eutyches found support in the Emperor Theodosius II and in the Alexandrian Patriarch Dioscorus. A council convened by the emperor at Ephesus (449), known in history under the name of the "Robber Council" for its lawless actions, condemned Patriarch Flavian and acquitted Eutyches. The papal legate present at the council, the deacon Hilary, declared his disagreement with the council's decision and fled to Rome, where the pope at once declared Dioscorus excommunicated and the decisions of the Council of Ephesus invalid; Dioscorus in turn anathematized Pope Leo in Alexandria. The question of the union of the two natures in the Lord Jesus Christ was finally settled after the death of Emperor Theodosius II (450). Empress Pulcheria and co-ruler Marcian came out against the heretics; in 451 the fourth (Chalcedonian) Ecumenical Council was convened, which deposed Patriarch Dioscorus and defined the dogma concerning the manner of union of the two natures in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ: "Following the Divine Fathers, we all with one accord

26. In 343, the Persian king Shapur II, by a special edict, imposed on the Christians of his kingdom taxes considerably heavier than before, because they refused to maintain the ancient religion of Zoroaster. When they refused to pay these taxes, he regarded this as rebellion and opened a cruel persecution, first against the Christian clergy and then against all Christians.

27. The word *eunuch* in Greek means "keeper of the bed." This was the name given to special court officials who had charge of the royal bedchamber. As a rule they were the persons nearest to the king.

28. The death of the holy martyrs falls on 13–23 April 344.

29. It is known that the persecution of Christians in Persia continued until the end of Shapur's reign, until 381.

teach to confess... one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, unconfusedly, immutably, indivisibly, inseparably... not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word." The decision of the Council of Chalcedon was not accepted in Egypt, in Armenia, and partly in Syria and Palestine. In these lands the Monophysite heretics exist to this day; their total number reaches 5,000,000: Syrian Monophysites or Jacobites 600,000, Armenian Gregorians 280,000, Copts about 300,000, and Abyssinians more than 2,000,000.

Monothelitism, or the heresy of one will, arose at the beginning of the seventh century under the influence of the desire of the Byzantine rulers to bring the widely spread Monophysitism back into the Church; the discord between the Orthodox and the Monophysites was a calamity not only ecclesiastical but also civil. Monophysite bishops, chiefly Cyrus, Bishop of Phasis in Colchis, suggested to the Emperor Heraclius (611–641) the idea that union between them and the Orthodox could take place if the Orthodox Church would acknowledge in Christ Jesus one will and one activity. In 633, through the efforts of the emperor and of Cyrus, who had been made Patriarch of Alexandria, union was brought about between the Egyptian Monothelites and the Orthodox; almost all the eastern and Greek bishops, with the Patriarch of Constantinople Sergius at their head, joined this union. Against this unlawful agreement there came out openly the favorite disciple of the Alexandrian Patriarch John the Merciful, the monk Sophronius, who showed that the doctrine of one will was also Monophysitism, that is, the acknowledgment in the Lord Jesus Christ of one Divine nature, for if the nature is one, then the will is naturally one as well. Having become Patriarch of Jerusalem in 634, he defended Orthodoxy with still greater zeal: he convened a council in Jerusalem which condemned Monothelitism. Wishing to put an end to the strife, the Emperor Heraclius in 638 issued the "Exposition of Faith" (ekthesis) composed by Patriarch Sergius, which contained the Orthodox teaching on the two natures in Jesus Christ and forbade speaking of His wills, while at the same time adding that the Orthodox faith requires the acknowledgment of one will. After the issuing of the "Exposition of Faith" the zealous defender of Orthodoxy was the Constantinopolitan monk Maximus the Confessor, who acted with success against the Monothelites in North Africa and Rome. Heraclius's successor Constans II, wishing to annul the ekthesis or "Exposition of Faith," which had caused still greater strife, issued in 648 the "Typos," a pattern of faith, which forbade speaking of either one will or two wills and required belief in accordance with the five Ecumenical Councils that had existed. But the "Typos" did not put an end to the disputes, as we see from the present Life. Finally, the Emperor Constantine Pogonatus (668–685) convened at Constantinople the sixth (Trullan) Ecumenical Council, at which Monothelitism was condemned as a heresy and it was defined that in Christ Jesus two activities, two wills must be confessed, the human will following and submitting in all things to the Divine will, without being annulled thereby. — Remnants of the Monothelites have survived to the present day in the form of the Maronite sect. At first (from 680) they found refuge in the Lebanon mountains; during the Crusades (1182) the teaching of the Monothelites penetrated to the West, into Europe, but thanks to the activity of the popes did not win many followers, although it persisted until 1736, when

the Monothelite Jews joined the Catholic Church. In the East, in Syria (in the district of Kesrawan), they exist to this day.



THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF APRIL

April 15

15 апреля

New Calendar April 15 · Old Calendar April 28 (civil dates)

Passion of the Holy Martyr Sabbas the Goth

Страдание святого мученика Саввы Готфского

"The Church of God that is in Gothia[1], to the Church of God that dwells in Cappadocia[2], and to all Christians of the Orthodox Church living among all the peoples of the world: mercy, peace and love from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ be multiplied." Thus begins the epistle from the Gothic Church to the Church of Cappadocia[3], in which the account of the following life is set forth. What the Holy Apostle Peter once said, that "in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:35), was fully accomplished in the Holy Sabbas, martyr of God and of our Savior Jesus Christ. The Holy Sabbas, being a Goth by birth and living among the impious and corrupt inhabitants of Gothia, imitated the holy men so faithfully and was so adorned with virtues like them, that he shone in the world as a bright star. For he, from the days of his youth, loved the law of the Lord and set himself the aim of his life in activity: to attain perfection of virtue, and through the knowledge of the Son of God to become a perfect man (cf. Eph. 4:13). To them that love God all

1. The Goths were a people of Germanic stock, who at first lived along the course of the Vistula and later spread along the Danube. At the beginning of the IV century, Christianity began to spread among the Goths. Its first preacher and establisher there was Wulfila, or Ulfilas, bishop of the Goths.

2. Cappadocia was a region in Asia Minor.

3. This epistle was written by Ascholius, bishop of Thessalonica, and Saran, commander of Scythia, a Cappadocian by birth, about 374, concerning the sending of the relics of the holy Martyr Sabbas from Gothia to Cappadocia. At that time the head of the Cappadocian Church was St. Basil the Great, who, having received the holy relics and the epistle, thanked the senders for them in letters that have come down to us in his writings.

things work together for good (cf. Rom. 8:28). Indeed, bravely resisting the devil and renouncing worldly vanity, the Holy Sabbas, keeping peace with all men, attained the heavenly Kingdom and was rewarded by God with eternal blessedness. In memory of this holy martyr and for the edification of pious Christians, we have judged it not right to pass over in silence the glorious deeds of this holy martyr, but to commit to writing the history of his sufferings.

The Holy Sabbas firmly confessed the holy Christian faith, was swift to do good, was distinguished by piety, meekness, and simplicity of speech, but not of understanding; he lived at peace with all, fearlessly defended the truth, thereby stopping the mouths of the pagan idol-worshippers; he was not proud, but, as becomes the humble, submitted to all; he was silent, always answered questions calmly and without anger, took part in the singing of the Church and was concerned for the good order of the church; he did not set his heart on acquiring property and money, being content only with what was necessary for daily needs; he was sober, temperate in all things, and had no fellowship with women. He spent all his time in fervent prayer and fasting, was free from vainglory, and by his example stirred all to a God-pleasing life, for he himself did only good and avoided whatever was contrary to virtue. Until the end of his life he kept the faith that "worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6), and never ceased to preach the name of Christ fearlessly. Before he was crowned with the crown of martyrdom for confessing the holy Christian faith, the Holy Sabbas had repeatedly shown himself by his deeds to be a steadfast champion of true piety.

When the Gothic princes and judges began to persecute the Christians and to force them to eat idol-offered sacrifices, some of the pagans agreed among themselves to offer their relatives and acquaintances who confessed the Christian faith, instead of idol-offered meats, meats that were not idol-offered, so that both the Christians might be preserved from eating the flesh offered to idols and the pagan persecutors might be satisfied. The Holy Sabbas, learning of this, not only did not himself wish to taste those meats, which, though not idol-offered, were presented as idol-offered, remembering the apostolic word: "But if any

man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not" (1 Cor. 10:28), but, standing among the people, fearlessly said aloud:

"Whoever has tasted these meats cannot remain a Christian."

By this admonition the saint hindered all from falling into the snare of the devil. Therefore those who had devised the said deception drove the Holy Sabbas out of their village, but soon asked him to return. When the persecution began again, some idolaters of the same village, who offered sacrifices to the idols, wished to inform the prince that there was not a single Christian in their village, and intended to confirm their words by oath. Then again the Holy Sabbas, fearlessly standing in the midst of the people, cried out with a loud voice:

"Let no one swear for me, for I am a Christian!"

The said idolaters, however, concealing their relatives who confessed the Christian faith, came to the prince and swore before him that in their village there were no Christians except one.

Hearing of this, the lawless prince commanded that this Christian (who was the Holy Sabbas) be brought before him. When he had been brought, the prince asked those present:

"Does this Christian have any property?"

They answered him:

"He has nothing except what he is wearing."

Looking upon the saint with contempt, the prince said:

"This man is hardly able to render anyone any help, or indeed to harm anyone." Having said this, the prince commanded that the saint be led away from there.

Some time later, a great persecution of the Christians was again stirred up in Gothia by the pagans. The day of the celebration of the Holy Pascha drew near, and the blessed Sabbas wished to go to another village, to the Christian priest named Gufinus, to celebrate the feast of the Holy Pascha together with him. As he was going there, on the way there appeared to him a man of great stature with a radiant face, who said to him:

"Return and go to your village, to the priest Sapsalus."

Sabbas answered:

"He is not at home, for on account of the persecution he has left the village and lives in the land of the Greeks." (The Holy Sabbas did not know that at that time this presbyter had returned to his house, in order to greet the feast of Pascha at home.)

Then, passing by the man who had appeared, Sabbas went on to the priest Gufinus.

That day was very windy; suddenly a great cloud came up and so deep a snow fell that Sabbas was unable to go further. After this Sabbas, perceiving that by God's providence he had been halted in his journey, returned back, glorifying God.

Coming to the house of the priest Sapsalus, he rejoiced greatly on seeing him, and related to him and to the others all that had happened to him on the way. And they all together celebrated the feast of Pascha.

On the third night of the feast, Afaridus, one of the impious chieftains, son of Prince Rotestus, fell upon that village with a great band of pagan warriors. Finding the priest sleeping peacefully in his house, he seized him, and also Sabbas, taking him naked right from his bed, and bound them both. The presbyter they placed in a cart and carried away, while Sabbas, naked, like an infant just born, they dragged over the thorns, cruelly striking him with clubs and whips, and so drove him all the way to the city. So merciless and cruel were the tormentors toward the servants of Christ! But the very cruelty of the tormentors contributed all the more to the full manifestation of the endurance and faith of the righteous man.

When day dawned, the Holy Sabbas proclaimed aloud the glory of his Lord and spoke thus to the tormentors: "Was it not over the thorns that you drove and dragged me naked and barefoot? Look now, are my feet wounded? Or are there any marks on my body from your blows?"

They, seeing not the slightest sign of blows on the saint's body, were greatly astonished at this. Then they took the axles of the cart, and one of them they placed on his shoulders, stretching his arms to the ends of the axle and binding them to it; the other axle the tormentors bound in the same way to the saint's legs. After this the tormentors threw the saint to the ground and tormented him severely the whole of that day until deep night. When the tormentors fell asleep, a woman

came who had risen during the night to prepare food for her household; she released the saint, and he, rising, began to help her in her work.

At the coming of day Afaridus again commanded that the saint's hands be bound and that he be hung on a crossbeam in the house. Some time later, messengers from Afaridus came to the presbyter and to Sabbas with idol-offered meat and said:

"Thus says to you the great Afaridus: taste of these meats, and you will be delivered from death."

The priest answered the messengers:

"We will not taste, for it is not fitting for us to eat what has been defiled by demons. We would rather agree that Afaridus crucify us or put us to death in some other way."

And the blessed Sabbas asked those who had come:

"Who sent this?"

They answered:

"Our lord Afaridus."

To this the saint said to them:

"One is the Lord, the God who is in heaven. Unclean and abominable is your deadly meat, as is that Afaridus himself, from whom you have been sent."

No sooner had the saint uttered these words than one of Afaridus' servants, falling into a violent rage, struck the saint in the chest with such force with the spear he held that all who stood there thought the martyr would die. But the martyr, preserved by Divine Providence, received no mark from the blow and felt no pain, and said to the one who had struck him:

"You think you have wounded me sorely with your spear; but I felt your blow no more than if someone had struck me with soft wool."

Learning of all that had happened, Afaridus commanded that the holy martyr Sabbas be put to death. Then the impious servants left the priest Sapsalus bound, took Sabbas and led him to the river called "Mussova"[4], to drown him there. The holy martyr, remembering the

4. The river Mussova was in Wallachia.

Lord's commandment of love for one's neighbor as oneself (cf. Matt. 22:39), asked the servants who were leading him:

"Why is the presbyter not being put to death together with me?"

They answered the saint:

"That does not concern you."

He, filled with joy, cried out:

Blessed art Thou, O God, and glorified is the name of Thy Son for ever. Amen. For Afarid himself delivered himself over to death and eternal destruction, but sent me away to life everlasting, without end. Thus is it pleasing to Thee, O Lord our God, that it should be with Thy servants.

Thus, even as he was led to death, the saint did not cease to praise and give thanks to God, counting "the sufferings of this present time" as "not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

Meanwhile, the servants said to one another:

"Why should we not release this innocent man? Afarid will not learn of it if we let him go."

But St. Sabbas said to them:

"Why do you speak foolish words? Rather, do what you have been told. For I see what you cannot see: behold, the holy Angels stand here, come in glory to take my soul."

Then they brought the holy Martyr to the river, tied a large piece of wood about his neck, cast him into the depths of the river, and drowned him. Thus St. Sabbas reposed, having kept the holy faith pure unto the end of his life. He lived thirty-eight years and was crowned with the martyr's crown on the fifth day after the feast of Pascha (that is, April 12[5], in the reign of Valentinian in the West and Valens in the East[6], and under the rule of the antipatēs[7] Modestus and Arinthaeus).

Some time later, the executioners drew the Martyr's body from the water and cast it upon the bank without burial. Yet neither beasts nor

5. The holy Martyr died in 372.

6. The Emperor Valentinian reigned from 364 to 375, and his brother Valens from 364 to 378.

7. An antipatēs was a proconsul, a governor of a state territory (province) of greater or lesser extent.

birds touched this precious body, for it was hidden by the hands of pious Christians.

One of the Scythian commanders, Junius Saran, who revered the true God, sent faithful men to take the Martyr's precious body from the land of the Goths and carry it into the Greek land. "Wishing to adorn his homeland, he sent this wondrous gift and glorious fruit of faith, at the counsel of the presbyters, to Cappadocia, to your piety," the letter concludes, "according to the will of the Lord, Who grants His grace to those who fear Him. As you celebrate the Martyr's memory on the day on which he was crowned with the martyr's crown[8], proclaim this also to the other brethren, that the whole Orthodox Apostolic Church, rejoicing spiritually, may glorify the Lord, Who has chosen such servants for Himself. Greet all the saints; all the brethren who suffer persecution with us kiss you with a holy kiss. To Him Who is able, by His grace and love for mankind, to bring us into the Heavenly Kingdom, be glory, honor, and worship, with His Only-begotten Son and the Most Holy Spirit, for ever. Amen."

* * *

Commemoration of the Holy Apostles Aristarchus, Pudens, and Trophimus[9]

Память святых апостолов Аристарха, Пуда и Трофима

St. Aristarchus, who is mentioned in the book of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 19:29) and in the epistles of the holy Apostle Paul to the Colossians (Col. 19:29) and to Philemon (Philem. 1:24), was bishop in the Syrian city of Apamea[10].

St. Pudens, of whom the Apostle Paul speaks in his second epistle to Timothy ("I greet thee, Eubulus and Pudens" (2 Tim. 4:21)), was a member of the Roman Senate[11]. Being a pious and virtuous

8. St. Demetrius of Rostov observes in the epilogue to the Life of St. Sabbas that it would be more fitting to celebrate the memory of this Martyr on April 12; but since the Prologue assigns it to the 15th, he also placed the account of St. Sabbas's suffering under that date in the Menaion-Reader.

9. The holy Aristarchus, Pudens, and Trophimus were Apostles of the Seventy.

10. Apamea lay in southwestern Syria, on the bank of the Orontes River.

man, he received the holy Apostles Peter and Paul in his house; other believers also gathered there for prayer, so that his house was later turned into a church, which received the name "Pastoral." Tradition says that the Apostle Peter himself served in this church.

St. Trophimus, whom the book of the Acts of the Apostles mentions (Acts 20:4), and whom the Apostle Paul also mentions in the same second epistle to Timothy in these words, "Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick" (2 Tim. 4:20), shared, together with the Apostles Pudens and Aristarchus, in the sufferings of the Apostle Paul amid all the persecutions that befell him.

All three Apostles mentioned above died in Rome together with the Apostle Paul[12], being beheaded with the sword by order of the Emperor Nero[13].

* * *

Commemoration of the Holy Martyrs Basilissa and Anastasia

Память святых мучениц Василиссы и Анастасии

Enlightened in the Christian faith by the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, the holy Basilissa and Anastasia devoted themselves to the service of the Lord, burying the bodies of the holy Martyrs who were put to death for Christ. When the Emperor Nero[14] was informed about them, they were seized by soldiers at his command and cast into prison. Thereafter they endured many torments for Christ: they were beaten without mercy, scraped with iron, and scorched with candles, yet remained steadfast and unshaken in the Christian faith. At last their heads were cut off[15], after which they departed unto the Lord, to

11. The Senate in Rome was the highest governing institution, which administered all affairs of state.
12. The holy Apostles died about 65.
13. Nero was a Roman emperor who reigned from 54 to 68 and is remembered as one of the most cruel persecutors of Christianity.
14. The Roman Emperor Nero, a cruel persecutor of Christianity, reigned from 54 to 68.
15. The holy Martyrs died in the second half of the I century. Their relics rest in Rome, in a church built in honor of the Mother of God, the Peacemaker.

stand before Him in heaven in the company of the other holy Martyrs, men and women.

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THE SIXTEENTH DAY OF APRIL

April 16

16 апреля

New Calendar April 16 · Old Calendar April 29 (civil dates)

Passion of the Holy Martyrs Agape, Chionia and Irene

Страдание святых мучениц Агапии, Хионии и Ирины

When the emperor Diocletian[1] was in the Italian city of Aquileia[2], word was brought to him from Rome that the Roman prisons were full of Christians, who, though they were subjected to manifold tortures, did not renounce their Christ. They all had Chrysogonus as their teacher, listened to him, and held firmly to his teaching. In response to this report, Diocletian ordered all the Christians put to death, except Chrysogonus alone, whom he commanded to be brought before him for torment.

When the holy Confessor of Christ Chrysogonus was being led bound from Rome to Aquileia to the emperor Diocletian, the holy Anastasia the Deliverer from Bonds followed him from afar, as her teacher.

On his arrival before Diocletian, the martyr of Christ was subjected to cruel tortures for refusing to obey the impious imperial command; then he was condemned to death and beheaded[3] outside the city in a remote, desolate place. His honorable body lay on the seashore, cast out to be devoured by beasts and birds.

Not far from that place there lived a priest named Zoilus, a pious elder. Near him dwelt three virgins, sisters in body and in spirit: Agape, Chionia and Irene. This priest, learning by divine revelation

1. Diocletian, Roman emperor, reigned from 284 to 305.
2. Aquileia – in antiquity a large and famous city in northern Italy, founded by the Romans two centuries before Christ. In the history of the Christian Church the city of Aquileia is notable as the site of several local councils and as the cradle of a particular symbol of faith (the so-called "Aquileian" creed).
3. The repose of holy martyr Chrysogonus is celebrated by the Church on December 22.

where the body of the holy martyr Chrysogonus lay, took it together with the head and, placing it in a wooden coffin, hid it in his house. Thirty days later the holy Chrysogonus appeared to him in a vision and said: "Know that within nine days the three virgins of Christ who live near you will be taken to torment. Therefore tell the handmaid of the Lord Anastasia to take care of them, encouraging them to bear the contest bravely until they are crowned with the crown of martyrdom. Be also in good hope that you will reap the sweet fruits of your labors, for you will soon be freed from earthly bonds, will with joy depart to Christ, and will rest together with the saints."

The same revelation was also given to the holy Anastasia. Moved by the Divine Spirit, she came to the house of the presbyter, whom she had not known before, and asked him:

"Where are those virgins whose martyric death was revealed to you in a vision?"

Learning where their dwelling was, she came to them, greeted them with love, and stayed with them one night, conversing with them in a manner that benefited the soul and was full of divine love, in which she encouraged them to stand bravely, even unto blood, for their Bridegroom Christ. Seeing in the priest's house the relics of the holy martyr of Christ, Chrysogonus, her beloved teacher, Anastasia wept over them for a long time, bathing them with her tears and commending herself to the prayers of this saint. After this she returned again to the city of Aquileia, and there continued to perform her customary service to the prisoners of Christ confined in the dungeons, helping them from her own means.

Indeed, everything came to pass just as the holy Chrysogonus had said to the priest Zoilus in the vision: ten days later this holy presbyter reposed in the Lord, and the three holy virgins, Agape, Chionia and Irene, were seized and led before the emperor Diocletian for torment.

Seeing them, the emperor asked:

"What madness has taught you to follow a wretched and vile error, debasing our just law and despising our gods as something unclean? But since I see that you are of noble birth, young and beautiful, I pity you and advise you to spare yourselves. Renounce your Christ and offer

sacrifice to the gods, and I will give you three young men of noble birth from my own retinue, fully worthy of your beauty, so that you may have famous husbands, and through them you yourselves will be honored."

To these imperial enticements the eldest sister, the holy Agape, answered:

"Emperor, it is fitting for you to concern yourself with the affairs of the people, with foreign nations, with the armies; yet you speak much that is unjust, debasing the Living God, Whose help you greatly need and Whose goodness bears patiently with you; and you revile Him."

Then Diocletian said:

"This girl is mad; bring me the other one."

Afterwards her sister, the holy Chionia, was brought to him, and she said to the emperor:

"My sister, emperor, is not mad. On the contrary, reasoning soundly, she has shown the wrongness of your exhortation to bow down to idols."

The emperor, not wishing to listen longer to this sister either, commanded that the third sister, the holy Irene, be brought nearer to him, and said to her:

"Since your sisters have lost their minds, you, the youngest of them, bow your head before the gods, so that your sisters, seeing you, may do the same."

But the holy Irene also answered firmly:

"Let all who have gone mad in their impiety against the True God bow their heads before idols. What can be more vain and more foolish than to worship a work of an artist, made by him for a certain payment? For first you consult the artist as to what price and what kind of idol to make, standing or seated, lying or leaping, laughing or weeping, and of what material—of wood, or of stone, or of bronze, or of some other material. And if he makes it poorly, you break the agreement; and if well, you pay the promised price. And then to this bought and made thing you bow, calling a statue your god, which should rather be called a purchased slave than a god."

In response to such words of the holy virgins Diocletian said:

"Such words must be answered with torments," and he ordered the holy virgins thrown into prison. Meanwhile the holy Anastasia (who, as was her custom, visited the prisoners in the dungeons) came also to these holy virgins and comforted them with the hope of God's help and the expectation of a glorious victory and triumph over their enemies.

After some time the emperor had to set out for Macedonia[4] to arrange certain public affairs. There were taken with him all the Christians who had been imprisoned in Aquileia, together with the three holy virgins, Agape, Chionia and Irene; the holy Anastasia also followed them. When they arrived in Macedonia, the emperor commanded the governor[5] Dulcitius to subject the Christians to torture, in order to compel them to offer sacrifices to idols; those who were disobedient he ordered to be put to death after various tortures. Since it is impossible to describe the sufferings of the multitude of holy martyrs who were then tormented there in various ways, we shall speak only of the martyric contests of the three holy virgins named above.

When these brides of Christ were brought to torment before the governor Dulcitius, he at once, seeing their extraordinary beauty, was inflamed with impure desire for them. He commanded that they be placed under guard and sent word to them through a soldier that they would receive freedom and many gifts if they consented to fulfill the prince's impious desire. But the holy virgins preferred to die a thousand times rather than to be defiled even once, so that neither by caresses, nor by threats, nor by gifts, nor by tortures could the governor bring them to consent to his impious wish. Unable to overcome the flame of lust burning within him, the governor resolved to come to them by night, into the chamber where they were kept, in order to defile them.

At nightfall the holy virgins stood in prayer, singing to God the all-night praise and psalms. The governor, wishing to enter to them, had scarcely touched the threshold of their chamber when he went out of his mind and could go no further. Near the place where the three sisters were was a kitchen, where stood many vessels—pots, cauldrons

4. Macedonia – a country on the Balkan Peninsula bordering the northwestern corner of the Aegean Sea (the Gulf of Thessalonica).
5. Hegemon – a provincial governor.

and pans, black with soot. Unable to enter the room in which the holy virgins were, the governor, deluded by demons, went into the kitchen, where he smeared himself with soot, befouling his face, his hands and all his clothing, and in this state came out to the servants waiting for him near that room with lighted lamps in their hands. The servants, seeing the governor all black, terrible, like an Ethiopian, were greatly frightened and, dropping their lamps, fled from there. The governor, puzzled why the servants had run away at the sight of him, thought they were laughing and mocking him, and fell into a great rage. By this time it had already begun to dawn, and wherever the prince passed, everyone scattered at the sight of him—servants, guards and soldiers, fleeing from him as from some monster. Then the governor went to the imperial palace, intending to complain to the emperor about the soldiers under his command, because they did not obey him and even mocked him. But as soon as he approached the imperial residence, he heard loud and prolonged laughter coming from there, some of those present fleeing in fright at him, others beating him and driving him away from the doors of the imperial dwelling, since no one could think that this was the governor Dulcitius, but all supposed him to be some kind of holy fool. The governor, however, still could not understand that he was all covered in soot, for his eyes, by the working of the devil, had been darkened. It seemed to him that his face was white and his clothing and hands clean. But when at last his servants perceived that their master had lost his senses, they ran after him at once and led him home, saying: "Look at yourself, what you have become!"

When he entered the house, his wife and all the household slaves, men and women, began to weep greatly, thinking that he had lost his mind; the others shrank from him and would not have fellowship with him. He himself was still bewildered and wondered why some wept over him while others even loathed him. Then his impious eyes were opened, and he saw himself defiled: in a mirror he perceived that his face was black, like that of an Ethiopian, and he understood that he had been put to shame by a demon. Then he became greatly enraged against the holy virgins, thinking that by their sorcery they had done all this to him, and he began to devise how he might take revenge on them. Having

washed his body and changed his clothes, he sat on the judgment seat in full view of all the people. Then the governor ordered the instruments of torture to be prepared and the holy virgins to be brought before him again. When the holy virgins were brought in, the governor commanded that they be stripped, that he might see their bodies. But as soon as they began to take their garments from them, they could do nothing, for by God's will the garments of the saints clung so firmly to their bodies, as skin clings to flesh, that all marveled at such a miracle. The servants, though they labored a long time to remove the saints' clothing, could not do it.

The governor, sitting in the court, suddenly dozed off and fell into so deep a sleep that no one could wake him: they pushed him and shouted loudly beside him, but he slept as one dead. Then, taking him as he slept, they carried him home. But as soon as he was brought into the house, he immediately awoke.

When the Emperor learned of all that had happened to the governor Dulcitius, he was greatly angered with him and ordered the holy virgins to be handed over for torment to the judge Sisinnius. This judge began his interrogation with the younger sister, Irene. He asked:

"Do you obey the imperial command?"

The saint answered:

"No, I do not obey it, for I am a Christian, a servant of the Almighty God."

Then the judge ordered her led away to prison. Next he summoned Agape and Chionia before the tribunal and said to them:

"Your younger sister has been seduced and taught by you to despise the divine laws; therefore I have decided for the present to postpone her torments, so that, seeing your sufferings, she may be afraid and obey us. If, however, you wish to be delivered from torment, offer sacrifice to the gods as we do, in obedience to the imperial command."

Saint Agape answered the judge:

"Our faith is unshakable."

Then the judge said to Chionia:

"And what do you say?"

Chionia answered:

"Our faith will remain unchanged."

Then the judge asked:

"Do you have any Christian books?"

The holy virgins answered:

"There are books, but they are hidden in our mind, from where they cannot be taken by the enemies of Christ."

The judge asked:

"Who taught you to surrender yourselves willingly to such torments?"

The holy virgins answered:

"These torments are temporary and bring great benefit, for through them one can attain eternal glory."

The judge said sternly:

"Fulfill the imperial command and offer sacrifices to the gods."

But the holy virgins said:

"We offer to God the sacrifice of praise; to the devil we will never offer sacrifice. Do not think to turn us away from God our Lord Jesus Christ; but carry out what your earthly emperor has commanded you, as we carry out the commands of our Heavenly King."

Then, enraged, the judge Sisinnius pronounced this sentence on the saints:

"I command that Agape and Chionia, who, after judicial admonition, have not agreed to carry out the imperial command, be burned alive."

Hearing such a sentence, the holy virgins were filled with joy and cried out loudly:

"We thank Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, that Thou hast granted us to be confessors of Thy Most Holy Name. Into Thy hands, O Master, receive our souls!"

Cast into the fire, the holy virgins prayed there, and in prayer they committed their souls into the hands of their Lord.[6] Meanwhile the strong flame did no harm not only to the bodies of the holy virgins but did not even touch their garments, so that no trace of fire remained upon them. This occurred as a sign to the pagans that the holy virgins

6. The repose of the holy virgin-martyrs Agapia and Chionia took place in 304.

had not died by fire, but had obtained from God a blessed end through their prayers. The servants of Saint Anastasia the Deliverer took up their honorable bodies, undamaged by the fire, during the night and brought them to their mistress. Saint Anastasia, anointing their holy bodies with fragrant oils, laid them with honor in a new tomb, rejoicing in spirit and praying that the Lord would grant her also to be a partaker in the blessedness of those holy virgins.

On the next day the judge Sisinnius again sat in judgment and ordered Saint Irene brought before him. When she had been brought, he said to her:

"Offer sacrifice to the gods, so that you too may not perish in the fire as your sisters perished."

But the saint answered with courage:

"I will not offer sacrifice, for I greatly desire to share in the blessedness of my sisters, lest I be far from them when they stand before the face of God."

"Heed our admonition," said the judge, "otherwise you will be subjected to even more cruel tortures than your sisters."

"I am ready for every kind of torment," the saint answered, "for I desire to die for the truth and through death to receive eternal life; I desire, passing through fire, to attain delight."

Then the judge said to her:

"I will order you led naked into a brothel, that you may be abused there until you die."

The saint answered:

"My body will suffer from the fornicator as from a biting dog, or a wolf, or a bear, or the sting of a serpent. And it is far better for me that my defiled body suffer, than that I defile my soul with idolatry; for a sin committed under compulsion, when the soul does not consent to it, is not imputed to guilt before God. Were the saints who suffered earlier for confessing the name of Jesus Christ defiled, when the tormentors forced into their mouths the blood of sacrifices offered to idols?"

"Were they not defiled who partook of our sacrifices?" asked the judge.

"Not only were they not defiled," the saint answered, "but for this they were crowned by God, since, with their hands bound, their mouths were forcibly opened and the blood of idol sacrifices was forcibly poured into them. A sin committed willingly deserves punishment, but one committed against the will is not reckoned. So also for me, who have given my body to my Christ: if you do anything by violence, I hope that I shall not be put to shame before my immortal Bridegroom, but shall receive from Him a reward, since for His sake I endure violence from you. I will pay no heed to what you wish to do with my body: whether you will hand it over to defilement, or to wounds, or to fire, I am ready to suffer all things for the name of the Lord my God. But my God has power and might, and will not permit you to do what you have planned to do to me."

Then the judge ordered the soldiers to lead the young virgin to the brothel, and commanded that she be given over there to abuse until she died. On the road, while the soldiers were leading the saint, two other soldiers, very majestic in appearance and bright of countenance, overtook them and said to the soldiers leading the saint:

"The judge has sent us to tell you to take this maiden to the place we show you."

And they led them outside the city and, bringing her up onto a very high hill, said to the soldiers:

"Go, tell the judge Sisinnius that you have placed the maiden on the hill, as you were commanded."

The soldiers went to the judge, while the two bright men became invisible, for they were Angels of God.

The holy virgin Irene stood on the hill, praising and thanking Christ God, who had delivered her from the hands of fornicators.

When the judge was informed of what had happened, he was greatly enraged that his command had not been carried out, and, mounting his horse, he rode to that hill.

Approaching, the judge saw the holy virgin standing on the hill, but he could not climb the hill, for it seemed to him that the hill was as if enclosed by a high wall that could not be crossed. Riding around the hill, he burned with great anger that he could not approach the holy

virgin, and so he rode from morning till evening, accomplishing nothing. Some of the soldiers with him, drawing their bows, shot arrows at the saint and wounded her. She cried out, addressing the judge:

"I laugh at you, wretch, that you have come against me, a weak woman, with weapons, as though against some strong man. But behold, I, kept pure and undefiled by you, depart to my Lord Jesus Christ, who now will number me among my sisters."

Having said this and given thanks to God, the saint lay down on the ground and committed her soul to the Lord. This happened on the day before the feast of the holy Pascha.[7]

When night came, Saint Anastasia sent her servants to take the honorable body of the holy martyr Irene from the hill, and, anointing it with fragrant oils, she laid it together with the bodies of her sisters.

Thus the holy martyrs, three sisters, virgins, Agape, Chionia and Irene, completed their suffering contest and stood in glory before the throne of the Most Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, to Whom be glory forever. Amen.

On the same day, the memory of the holy martyr Leonidas and with him the holy women Hariessa, Nunechia, Basilissa and Theodora, who suffered in Corinth and were drowned in the sea, in the year 251.

* * *

Suffering of the Holy Martyr Irene

Страдание святой мученицы Ирины

Holy Martyr Irene suffered during the Feast of Holy Pascha in Greece.[8] Together with many other Christians she dwelt in one cave, and all of them spent their time in constant prayer. The impious servants of idols informed the governor against them, and at his command St. Irene was seized, brought in fetters, and cast into prison. Then, standing before the governor and being examined, she boldly confessed Jesus as the true God, the Creator and Savior of all that ex-

7. The repose of holy martyr Irene took place in 304.

8. According to the Prologue, the holy martyr suffered in the city of Corinth, but according to the Chetya-Minea, in Macedonia. Her martyric death is dated either to 205 (the time of the persecution of Decius) or to 304, the time of the persecution of Diocletian.

ists, the Redeemer of men and the destroyer of idols. For this she was beaten and again cast into prison. After this the governor occupied himself with the cases brought to him by the townspeople, and then, being free of them, ordered the saint to be brought out of prison once more. When she was brought before him, he began to compel her to renounce Christ, but she would not hear of it. Then, at the tormentor's command, she was subjected to cruel tortures: her tongue was cut out, her teeth were knocked out, and finally her head was severed with a sword.

* * *

ALSO COMMEMORATED THIS DAY

On the same day, the memory of the holy martyr Leonidas, and with him the holy women Hariessa, Nunechia, Basilissa and Theodora, who suffered at Corinth and were drowned in the sea in 251.

THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF APRIL

April 17

17 апреля

New Calendar April 17 · Old Calendar April 30 (civil dates)

Suffering of the Hieromartyr Simeon, Bishop of Persia

Страдание святого священномученика Симеона, епископа Персидского

When in Persia[1] the number of Christians greatly increased, and they had their own churches, bishops, priests and deacons,[2] the pagan magi, seeing this, were filled with great fury and wrath against the Christians. These magi, deriving their lineage from the most ancient magi, were the defenders and guardians of the impious Persian superstition. Together with them the Jews, the ever-present enemies of Christianity, also rose up against the Christians. Conspiring with the magi, they persuaded the Persian King Sapor[3] to raise a persecution against the Christians.[4] Even earlier than this they had slandered before him St. Simeon, who was bishop of the city of Seleucia-Ctesiphon,[5] saying that this Christian bishop was hostile to the Persian kingdom and was friendly with the Greek emperor, to whom he was supposedly reporting everything that took place in Persia.

Then King Sapor first laid upon the Christians a large and very heavy tribute, and ordered stern men to oversee the payment of the

1. Persia occupies the western part of the Iranian plateau. Its present boundaries are: Turkey on the west, Afghanistan and Baluchistan on the east, the Indian Ocean on the south, and the Transcaspian region on the north. The founder of the Persian monarchy was Cyrus, who reigned from 558 to 529 B.C., known for his conquests (he conquered almost all of western Asia).
2. This was in the 4th century A.D.
3. Shapur II, king of Persia from 310 to 381.
4. The persecution of Christians was raised by Shapur II in the 32nd or 33rd year of his reign, that is, in 343–344.
5. Seleucia-Ctesiphon is the name of a Persian city divided by the river Tigris into two opposite parts. This city was founded by Seleucus I Nicator, who reigned from 353 to 281 B.C.

tribute. Then he began openly to put to death the priests and servants of God, to plunder church property, and to ruin the churches themselves, tearing them down to the foundations. As for Bishop Simeon, as a supposed enemy of the Persian kingdom and an opponent of the impious Persian superstition, he commanded that he be seized and brought before him for judgment.

In accordance with the royal command, St. Simeon was brought before the king together with two priests, Abdelas and Ananias. The bishop, taken by the soldiers and bound with iron chains, not only was not afraid of the king's wrath, but did not even bow to him. Therefore the king, greatly enraged, asked the saint:

"Why do you not bow to me, as you bowed before?"

The saint answered:

"Before, I was not brought to you as I am brought now, and I bowed before you, paying the honor due to your rank. But now, when I have been brought to renounce my God and to depart from my faith, it is not fitting for me to bow to you, the enemy of my God."

The king began to persuade him to bow to the sun,[6] and promised him many gifts and honors for this, threatening that otherwise he would utterly destroy Christianity in his kingdom. When the king saw that the saint was steadfast, and that neither by flattery nor by threats was he inclined toward his impiety, he commanded that he be cast into prison.

At the time when the saint was being led from the royal palace to the prison, he was seen by the eunuch[7] Usphazan,[8] already advanced in years, who had raised King Sapor from his childhood and enjoyed great honor from all, since he was the man closest to the king. This eunuch was then sitting near the royal palace, and seeing that Bishop Simeon was being led out, he at once rose from his place and bowed low to the bishop of God. But St. Simeon turned his face away from him and loudly reproached him for his apostasy, for he had at first been a Chris-

6. Sun-worship was a feature of nearly all pagan religions.

7. A eunuch was a castrated servant, usually intended for service in the harems of the East. Placed in a position to act upon eastern rulers, both directly and through their favorite wives and concubines, eunuchs often acquired a strong influence over the course of affairs of state.

8. The pagan name of Usphazan was Gugsciatazad.

tian and afterwards had bowed to the sun out of fear before the king. After this Usphazan began to grieve deeply, to weep and to sob; he took off his precious garments, clothed himself in plain and coarse raiment, and sitting at the doors of the royal palace, said to himself with tears: "Woe is me, wretch! How shall I stand before my God, from whom I have turned away? Here is Simeon, and even he has turned his face from me because of my apostasy; how then will my Creator look upon me?"

Speaking thus, he wept inconsolably. Learning of this, King Sapor at once summoned him, and seeing that he was weeping, asked him:

"What is the cause of your sorrow? What grievous thing has befallen you in the royal palace?"

Usphazan answered:

"No, nothing evil or sorrowful has befallen me in your palace, although I would wish to bear all the misfortunes, sorrows and calamities of the world rather than the one thing over which I now grieve in heart and weep, namely that I still live on earth. I am so old in years, and long ago I should have died, and yet I still look upon the sun, to which I bow as to a god. It would have been better for me to die than to depart from God, the Creator of all creation, by bowing to a creature instead of the Creator. But I did this not from my sincere desire, but hypocritically, wishing to please you; therefore I deserve the death penalty for two reasons: first, I have renounced Christ, my God, and second, in my old age I have proved unfaithful to you. But I swear by God, the Creator of heaven and earth, that I will no longer commit such a sin. I will no longer anger the Lord and my God Jesus Christ, the Immortal King, for the sake of a mortal king; I will no longer bend my knees before the sun, the creature of God, but will worship the Creator Himself from this day until the end.

Hearing Usphazan, King Sapor was greatly astonished at such an unexpected change in him, and began to rage even more against the Christians, thinking that they had seduced Usphazan by some sorcery. Pitying the old man, he began to beg him, as a father would, not to do such dishonor to their gods, such disgrace to himself, and such sorrow

to the royal house, and he urged him to this, now with flattery, now with threats. But Usphazan answered the king:

"I have had enough of that folly which I permitted earlier; now I will not do so again, I will not honor the creature instead of the Creator."

After long and varied exhortations, the king, seeing that Usphazan was unyielding, condemned him to be beheaded by the sword.

Being led to the death penalty, the blessed Usphazan called to himself one of his faithful friends, a eunuch and royal chamberlain,[9] and asked him to go to the king and convey to him his last words. He said thus:

"O King, thus says Usphazan: remember my service, remember how from my youth I served first your father and then you, until this last time, with all diligence. To confirm this no witnesses are needed, for you yourself know it well. For all this service I ask of you one reward: make known to all why I am dying. Command the herald to proclaim it aloud, so that all the princes, the nobles and the whole people may know that Usphazan is dying not for any crime or offense against the king, but because he is a Christian and would not renounce his God."

When this request was conveyed to King Sapor, he agreed to fulfill it, for he hoped thereby to strike great fear into all the Christians, if they heard that even the old Usphazan, an honest and gentle man, the royal tutor, had not been spared by the king, but without mercy was delivered to death for confessing the name of Christ. But St. Usphazan thought otherwise: he thought that the Christians, whom he had frightened and grieved by his apostasy from Christianity, on learning of his conversion and his martyr's death for Christ, would rejoice and be strengthened to bear steadfastly similar sufferings.

Thus the holy martyr was beheaded, with the herald proclaiming aloud that Usphazan went to his execution not for any other fault than that he confessed Christ.

Of this death of Usphazan learned the holy bishop Simeon, who remained in prison with the priests and the other Christians. They were

9. *Cubicularius* (from Lat. *cubiculum*, bedchamber) — a chamberlain, the overseer of the royal bedchamber.

filled with inexpressible joy and glorified God, who had turned Usphazan from his error and crowned him with the martyr's crown.

Some time later, being summoned a second time before the king, St. Simeon spoke much, with boldness, about the Christian faith, and would not bow to the sun, nor bend before the king.

Then, enraged, the king commanded that all the Christians who were held in prisons and in chains be led out to be put to death on the day of the saving Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those led out to execution numbered one hundred persons, among whom were many priests, deacons and clergy. All of them were condemned by the king to be beheaded by the sword before the eyes of Simeon, and after them all Simeon himself was to be put to death. As the bound Christians were being led to death, the eldest of the magi cried out loudly: "If any of you wishes to remain alive, let him bow with the king to the sun, and he shall at once be released into freedom."

But not one Christian responded to his call; no one answered him anything, for no one wished to prefer temporal life to eternal, but each desired to die gladly for Christ, the Giver of life. The holy bishop strengthened all to bear torments and death fearlessly, instructing all with the words of Holy Scripture and strengthening all to endure sufferings by the hope of eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven. And all of them were beheaded by the sword. Then St. Simeon, the shepherd of his rational flock, who had sent his flock before him to Christ, the Chief Shepherd, after all the others himself laid his head under the sword and departed to the Lord.[10] Together with him were also put to death the two presbyters taken with him, Abdelas and Ananias, both advanced in years.

When it came Ananias's turn to bow his head under the sword, he began to fear and to tremble with fright. A certain noble man standing near him, named Phusik, who had been the chief of all the lower servants in the palace and who secretly professed Christianity, seeing that the priest Ananias was frightened of the sword, cried out, turning to him:

10. The death of St. Symeon and the other martyrs with him took place in 343 or 344.

"Do not be afraid, elder! Close your eyes and be steadfast, for you will at once see the divine light."

No sooner had this man said it than he was at once recognized as a Christian; he was seized and brought before the king. And he, without fear, confessed himself a Christian before the king and renounced the impious Persian faith.

Hearing his words, the king fell into a violent rage and commanded that he be put to death, but not by the sword; he was to die by some other painful means. They cut open the back of his neck, drew out his tongue and cut it off, and then flayed the skin from the saint's whole body. In such torments the saint was put to death.

At the same time the persecutors seized his daughter, a maiden named Askitrea, and after cruel torture they put her to death also. Many other confessors of the faith in the Lord Jesus were slain at that time. A year later, likewise on Great Friday, St. Azat, a eunuch and most beloved of the king's servants, was put to death together with a thousand holy martyrs. The Holy Church reckons the number of those martyred for Christ during this whole period at one thousand one hundred and fifty persons. The church historians Sozomen[11] and Nicephorus Callistus[12], however, relate in their writings that at this time an innumerable multitude of Christians was slain, on the very day of Christ's Passion and on the day of holy Pascha. For as soon as the command went forth from the impious king Sapor to put to death all the Christians in his land, the faithful of both sexes, old and young, hastened forth of their own accord from their houses and without fear gave themselves up to death, joyfully dying for their Lord.

When St. Azat the eunuch had been slain, the king greatly regretted him, for he had loved him dearly, and therefore he commanded that the killings be stopped. He only ordered his magi to search out and subject to torments the teachers and instructors of the Christians, the

11. The church historian Sozomen lived in the 5th century and served as an advocate in Constantinople. He continued the *Ecclesiastical History* (begun by the historian Eusebius) from 323 to 439.

12. Nicephorus Callistus was a church historian of the 14th century, a monk of the monastery of Holy Wisdom in Constantinople. His *Church History* (in 18 books) extends to the death of the Byzantine emperor Phocas (c. 611).

bishops and presbyters, while the rest of the Christians were to be spared. We, honoring the memory of all the holy martyrs, glorify Christ our Savior, the Author and Bestower of the crowns, who is glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever. Amen.

* * *

Life of Our Holy Father Acacius, Bishop of Melitene

Житие во святых отца нашего Акакия, епископа Мелитинского

The holy man of God Acacius was a native of the Armenian city of Melitene[13], and he came of pious and God-fearing parents, who, having no children, obtained this blessed fruit from God through prayer and fasting. Having raised their son in book learning, the parents took him to the bishop of that city and gave him over to the service of God, for so they had promised when they asked God for a child.

The bishop of the city of Melitene at that time was the blessed Otreius. This was the same Otreius who, at the Second Ecumenical Council of the Holy Fathers, convened in the reign of Theodosius the Great[14] against the Pneumatomachian Macedonius[15], was among the one hundred and fifty Fathers a particularly steadfast champion of piety. Together with St. Gregory the Theologian[16] and the other zealots and defenders of Orthodoxy, he stoutly defended it and battled against the heresy. To this pious man, St. Otreius, the blessed youth Acacius was entrusted by his parents.

St. Bishop Otreius, perceiving in the youth the grace of God, ordained him to the clergy of the Church. And Acacius grew from strength to strength, prospering in the virtues, zealously performing the labors of the Church, perfecting himself in virtue and holiness, and

13. The city of Melitene was located in the northern part of Lesser Armenia.
14. Theodosius I the Great, Roman emperor, reigned from 379 to 395.
15. The heretic Macedonius, who held the rank of Bishop of Constantinople until his deposition by a council, impiously taught the inequality of the third Person of the Holy Trinity with the first two, acknowledging the Holy Spirit as a creature of God the Father. The heresy of Macedonius was condemned at the Second Ecumenical Council, held in 381 at Constantinople.
16. St. Gregory the Theologian, the most celebrated father and teacher of the Church of the 4th century, lived from 328 to 390. He wrote 243 letters, 507 poems (discourses in verse form), and 45 orations, of which five *Words on Theology*, directed against the false teaching of the Arians, are especially remarkable. His memory is celebrated on January 25.

striving to be useful to everyone. The Venerable Euthymius the Great, while still a boy, was also a pupil of his in learning. But St. Acacius was the teacher not only of children but also of adults, edifying all by both word and the example of his virtuous life, especially after he attained the priestly rank and was bound to care for the salvation of the human souls entrusted to him. As a chosen vessel of the Holy Spirit, he was in due time raised to the episcopal rank, being fully worthy of it. When St. Otreius, Bishop of Melitene, passed from this life to the Lord, the blessed Acacius was unanimously chosen in his place and by due order was raised to the episcopal throne, as a burning candle set upon a golden candlestand to enlighten the whole universe (see Mt. 5:15–16). This bishop so pleased God and was so great in his holiness that he was granted the gift of working miracles. We shall relate here, in brief words, some of his many miracles.

Once a great drought occurred, as a result of which a severe famine was expected. The whole people were in great affliction. The hierarch of Christ, together with the famished people, went to the church of the holy Great Martyr Eustathius, which stood outside the city, and there he besought the martyr of Christ to pray with them to the Lord and to obtain from Him rain to refresh the parched earth. Then he set up, not far from the church, on a raised and open place, a table of oblation and the Holy Table, and began here to offer the bloodless sacrifice, praying to the Lord with tears. In doing so the Venerable did not mix water with the wine in the holy chalice, as is ordinarily done, but, lifting up his mind to God, he prayed fervently that God Himself would send water from on high and with this rainwater mix the wine in the chalice, and at the same time give drink to the parched earth. And the prayer of the saint was so mighty and efficacious that at once a heavy rain fell, which not only mixed the wine in the chalice but sufficiently watered the earth as well. The sorrow of all the people present was turned into joy, and all glorified and thanked God. In that year there was an abundant harvest of fruits, through the prayers of the man of God Acacius.

In that same country there was a full-flowing river which very often overflowed its banks and flooded the neighboring villages. Once this river rose so unusually that even large buildings not far from it were

wholly inundated, and some were even destroyed; rising higher and higher hour by hour, the river threatened to flood a multitude of the surrounding dwellings. Then the hierarch of Christ Acacius, seeing that the people were suffering greatly from this flood, went to the river, and after offering a prayer to God, he placed a stone not far from the bank and forbade the river to pass the boundary he had set. At once the water returned within its banks; although the volume of water in it had increased considerably, since its channel had become narrower, the river did not spill over its banks beyond that stone, by which, as by some barrier, the hierarch had confined the river within its banks.

Eighteen stadia[17] from the aforementioned city there was a place belonging to the Greeks, called Miasina, very beautiful and level. In the midst of this place stretched a great plain, through which, toward the east, flowed a swift and clear river called Azor, or Azur; this river flowed through several lakes. On the most beautiful and elevated spot there stood an idol temple, surrounded by an orchard of fruit trees, watered by the waters of one of the lakes of the river Azur. This place had been defiled by demonic abominations, for here the idol-worshipping Greeks often assembled and offered impious sacrifices to their gods.

St. Acacius, burning with zeal for Christ, desired to cleanse this place and consecrate it for the glorification of the True God. For this work he had to labor very much, for the pagan priests strongly opposed his intention and would not yield their sacrificial place of idols. And when the saint began to build there a church in the name of the Most Holy Theotokos, those wicked men hindered him in every way: what the faithful had built during the day was torn down at night by the impious idolaters. But the holy man of God Acacius, arming himself against them with prayer, overcame his enemies. With God's help he destroyed the idol temple and built a church in honor of the Mother of God. Having consecrated this church, he made the place that had formerly served as the dwelling of demons a dwelling of the holy Angels, and he established a monastery at the church of the Most Holy

17. A stadion (stadia) — a measure of length equal to approximately 88 of our sazhens.

Theotokos for the life of virtuous monks. Thus, where bloody impious sacrifices to the devil had formerly been offered, there now began to be offered the bloodless pure sacrifice to the True God and daily praises and prayers. By the grace of the Most Pure Mother of God and by the prayers of the wonderworker Acacius, miracles were wrought in that place, and seeing them, the Greeks abandoned their impiety and turned to faith in Christ God. Let us recall one of the glorious miracles that occurred there.

It happened that the builders of the aforesaid church, through their negligence, built the church vault insecurely, and when the hierarch of Christ Acacius was performing the Divine Service in the sanctuary, this vault leaned inward into the church and was ready to fall there. Seeing this, all the people present in the church began to leave the temple in disorder; but the hierarch cried out:

"The Lord is the strength of my life: of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 26:1).

And at once the fall of the church vault was held back, and by the saint's prayer it hung, as it were, in the air, supported by the saint's prayer as though by some firm foundation. And so it remained until the hierarch finished the entire service and went out of the church with his clergy. No sooner had he left it than the vault fell to the ground with a great crash, without harming anyone.

Once, in another church, in a village called Samuria, the same good shepherd was offering spiritual food to his flock of rational sheep, preaching the word of God. While he was speaking with the people, a multitude of swallows present there drowned out the saint's voice with their loud cries and hindered the people from hearing his words, so that at times scarcely any of the words issuing from the God-speaking lips of the bishop could be heard. Then, pausing for a brief moment in his discourse to the people, the saint turned to the swallows and commanded them all, in the name of the Creator, to be silent and to cease their cries. And at once the swallows fell silent, being unable to utter a single sound, and they flew away entirely from there, leaving their nests behind. From that time on the swallows built no nests there, and if any of them chanced to fly to that church, it could not chirp there,

but, like one struck dumb, after flying about the church for a little while, it flew away from there as though driven by someone.

Not far from the city, St. Acacius had a house in which he had lived even before he took up the episcopal rank. When he ascended the hierarchal throne, however, he turned his house into a hospital and a refuge for the poor and the infirm. The hierarch often visited his hospital, bringing what the sick needed and himself serving them. Once, coming to the sick during the harvest, he asked them whether they were all content and whether they lacked anything. They answered that they had everything in abundance, and that there was only one thing that tormented them: a multitude of flies, which caused them great suffering by settling on their ulcers and sores and biting their bodies painfully. The saint immediately prayed to God, drove the flies away from there by his prayer, and commanded the flies never to appear there again. And so it was until the death of the servant of God: from that time no fly was seen in that house. Such is the miracle which this wondrous man wrought by the grace of God.

In a similar manner he commanded the toads, which were croaking loudly in the lake and disturbing the hearing of the sick, to be silent. Some time later, however, he took pity on the toads and again released them from silence, but not wholly. For he permitted them to utter their cry quietly, though not as loudly as they had cried before. In a waterless place the hierarch brought forth from a dry rock a spring of cold water and gave drink to the thirsty; by many other wondrous deeds this great wonderworker amazed the world.

St. Acacius was present at the Third Ecumenical Council, held in the city of Ephesus in the reign of the Emperor Theodosius the Younger.[18] There, together with St. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, and the other holy Fathers, Acacius deposed the impious Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople,[19] the blasphemer of the Most Pure Virgin Theotokos, and pronounced anathema upon him. St. Acacius was beloved

18. Theodosius II the Younger, Roman emperor, reigned from 408 to 450. The Third Ecumenical Council was convened during his reign, in 431.

19. Nestorius wrongly taught the union in Jesus Christ of two natures, divine and human. He said that Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary as a mere man, that is, with only a human nature; the divine nature, he said, dwelt in Him only afterward, and at times left Him.

and praised by all the holy Fathers, and enjoyed the respect of the emperor himself.

Having governed the Church of Christ wisely for a long time and having wrought many miracles, St. Acacius peacefully departed to the Lord. His honorable body was buried beside the body of the holy martyr Polyeuctus. With him he now stands before the Lord, and with the choir of the other saints glorifies the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the One God, forever glorified by all creation. Amen.

* * *

Passion of the Holy Martyr Adrian

Страдание святого мученика Адриана

The holy martyr of Christ Adrian was one of those Christians who, long before their trial, had been seized and imprisoned in various dungeons. He was brought out of the prison at the time when sacrifice was being offered to the pagan gods, and when all the pagans[20] devoted to the idols took part in the sacrifice. The holy martyr was also compelled to approach the altar and to lay his palm upon it; but he not only refused to do this, he boldly and courageously went up to the altar, destroyed it, cast down the offerings lying upon it, and scattered the fire. By this act he aroused the wrath of the governor, and the idol-worshippers present were so enraged that they seized the saint and began to beat him without mercy. Some struck him with clubs, others with iron rods, and some, seizing stones, knocked out his teeth; and finally they heated a huge furnace and cast the holy martyr into it. The tormentors burned his body; but in spirit he ascended to heaven to God.[21]

* * *

20. It must be supposed that at the time when the holy martyr was brought out of the prison some pagan festival was taking place, and a public sacrifice was being offered to the pagan gods.
21. According to the Menologion of Basil, St. Martyr Hadrian suffered at the same time as Leonidas and Irene, whose memory is celebrated on April 16.

Life of Our Venerable Father Zosimas, Abbot of Solovki

Житие преподобного отца нашего Зосимы, игумена Соловецкого

One year after the repose of the Venerable Sabbatius, it pleased the Lord to glorify the place on the Solovetsky Island where this holy man had labored, by establishing here a glorious and great monastery. For this work the Lord chose a man like the Venerable Sabbatius in his labors: the Venerable Zosimas, of whom our word will now speak.

The Venerable Zosimas came from the region of Novgorod; his native place was the village of Tolvuya, which stood on the shore of Lake Onega. His parents, Gabriel and Barbara, who lived a strictly pious life, from his early years reared the youth in Christian virtues and also taught him to read. The youth Zosimas was quiet in temperament, gentle, and meek of heart, and he shunned all the evil customs of youth. As he grew in body and spirit, Zosimas studied the holy books diligently, learning from them the riches of the goodness of God.

Desiring to preserve purity of soul and body, the chaste youth resolved not to enter into marriage; although he did not loathe it as something impure in itself, he chose to avoid it as an obstacle to pleasing God, according to the words of the Apostle, who says: "The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife" (1 Cor. 7:32–33). Thus, in order to please the one God alone, he resolved to renounce the pleasing of his flesh. When his parents began to urge him to marry, the Venerable, deeply grieved by this, left his parental home, renounced the world, and, taking upon himself the monastic habit, settled in a solitary place not far from his parental home, as a hermit, and there began to labor in prayer and fasting.

The Venerable desired to have a guide for himself as well, since he had not yet sufficiently studied Holy Scripture and had not yet been instructed in the strictly ascetic life, and therefore he needed such a skilled teacher who would show him by his own deeds what a youth zealously striving after virtue should learn. Besides this, the Venerable

feared that some hindrance to his labors might come from his kinsfolk, near whom he was living. For this reason he resolved to depart from there to some more solitary place, where he might wholly devote himself to the strictly ascetic life, all the more so because the fire of divine love was kindling ever more and more in his heart and urging him to perfect himself still further in the virtues.

But at first the Venerable did not know where or how to found a monastery, and he earnestly besought God to show him a place for a monastery and to send him every means for carrying out his intention.

By the providence of God, the Venerable Zosimas met a virtuous monk named Herman, who had previously lived with the Venerable Sabbatius on the Solovetsky Island. This monk related to the Venerable Zosimas the story of the life and labors of the Venerable Sabbatius, and also told him that the Solovetsky Island was remote from worldly settlements and suitable for the habitation of monks, since it abounded in forests and lakes filled with fish.

Hearing this, the Venerable Zosimas rejoiced greatly in spirit and desired to dwell on that island and to be the successor of the Venerable Sabbatius; wherefore he began earnestly to ask Herman to bring him to that desert island and to teach him there the monastic life.

About this time the parents of the Venerable Zosimas ended their lives. After burying their bodies and distributing their property to the poor, the blessed Zosimas together with Herman set out for the Solovetsky Island. With God's help they safely reached the island and disembarked at the place where seafarers were accustomed to stop; here there was no surf and the water was fresh. Not far from the shore the saints set up a tent[22] and in it they celebrated an all-night vigil, chanting the psalms of David and praying to Christ God and to the Most Holy Theotokos for help and blessing from on high for their settling on that desert island.

On the following morning, the Venerable Zosimas, coming out of the tent, saw a brightly shining ray of light which illumined him and the

22. Venerable Zosimas first arrived on the Solovetsky Island in 1429. Venerable Zosimas together with Herman landed near Mount Sekirnaya, ten versts from the site of the present monastery, and there they erected a wooden cross.

whole place; and lifting his eyes to the east, he saw on the clouds a church, great and beautiful. Since the Venerable was not yet accustomed to such revelations of God, he could not gaze long upon this church, and soon he hastened back into the tent. Herman, seeing him disturbed in countenance, thought that he had beheld something extraordinary, and asked him: "Why have you changed countenance, beloved? What have you been frightened by? Have you seen something new and unusual?"

In answer to Herman's words, Zosimas told him how he had seen a ray of light descending from on high and illuminating that place, and also the Church resting upon the clouds. Pondering this vision, Herman remembered the departure of the laypeople from this island (which had happened under the abbot Sabbatius) and the prophecy of Sabbatius about the founding of a monastic community on the island, and he said to Zosimas:

"Do not be afraid or fear, beloved, but attend to yourself, for it seems to me that it is pleasing to the Lord to gather here, through you, a multitude of monks."

Then Herman told him of the incident that had befallen the fisherman's wife and a man from the Korela shore, who had come to this island to keep it for themselves out of envy: namely, he related how two shining youths had beaten that woman, saying:

"There is no place for you on this island; depart from here, for this place has been prepared by God for the settling of monks."

St. Zosimas, hearing these words from Herman, was filled with spiritual joy and was all the more strengthened in his intention to establish a monastery here.

Having fervently prayed to God that He would assist their work and help them bring it to completion, the ascetics set to labor. First they began to cut the trees needed for building cells, then they built the cells and enclosed the courtyard with a fence, laboring at once in bodily and spiritual toil: bodily in the construction of the monastery, and spiritually arming themselves against the demons with the panoply of fasting and prayer. The Venerable Fathers obtained their food by the sweat of their brow, tilling the land and sowing it with seed. God strengthened

His servants, mercifully regarding them from on high and aiding all their works.

Some time later Herman set out to procure the necessities of life on the other side of the sea;[23] after spending several days there, he wished to return, but could not, for autumn had come, the air had grown cold, snow fell, storms arose, the sea grew rough and was filled with ice; thus it was no longer possible to sail back by boat to the Solovetsky Island. Therefore the Blessed Herman remained on that shore for the whole winter, while the Venerable Zosimas remained alone on the island.

At first the Venerable Father, being alone, grieved greatly for the elder Herman, but afterwards he placed all his hope in God, saying with David: "Upon Thee have I been cast from the womb; from my mother's belly Thou art my God. Depart not from me" (Ps. 21:11–12). And again: "Upon Thee was I stayed from the womb; Thou didst draw me out of my mother's bowels" (Ps. 70:6). The Venerable Father began to labor even more diligently, adding toil to toil, and continually devoting himself to the ascetic feats of fasting and prayer. The demons, unable to bear the holy life of the ascetic in their malice and envy, waged war upon him: at times they induced despondency in him, at times they frightened him with various apparitions and wild cries, intending to terrify the valiant soldier of Christ and to shake the unshakable; at other times, assuming the form of wild beasts and serpents, they rushed upon him furiously as though intending to tear him to pieces. But the servant of God resisted them with the sign of the cross and with prayer, and mocking them, said:

"O insignificant power of the enemy! If you have authority from God, then do with me what you will; but if you do not, you labor in vain." And he sang the verse of David's Psalms: "They compassed me about, they compassed me about; but in the name of the Lord I brought them down" (Ps. 117:11); and again: "Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered" (Ps. 67:2).

23. This was in 1435.

Then the saint offered up to God fervent prayer, crying out in the tenderness of his heart:

"Eternal God, beginningless King, Creator and Lord of every creature! Thou art the King of kings and the Lord of lords; Thou art the Savior of souls and the Deliverer of those who believe in Thee; Thou art the hope of the laboring and the expectation of those who sail upon the sea; Thou art the Teacher of Thy servants; Thou art the Protector of all good, the Comforter of those who weep, the joy of the saints; Thou art eternal life and unfading light; Thou art the source of holiness; Thou art the glory of God the Father, the fullness of the Holy Spirit; Thou sittest with the Father and reignest forever. Thee I beseech, Thy servant, humbly falling before Thee: hear my supplication, O Most Holy King, most merciful Lord, and turn not Thy face from my prayer, but deliver me from the mouth of the all-destroying serpent who is preparing to swallow me; keep me unharmed from the slanders of the devil, that I, guarded and protected by Thy holy Angels, may be saved from his fury and receive salvation from Thee, my Master and Lord, in whom I believe, on whom I hope, and whom I glorify with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever."

Thus praying, the Venerable Father boldly drove away from himself all the assaults of the enemy; at his prayer and the sign of the cross the demons fled like dust before the wind; and he remained unharmed by them, praising and glorifying God.

Another temptation befell the Venerable Father. During that harsh winter the store of food gathered in summer was running out, and the Venerable Father began to be troubled in mind, not knowing how he would be fed until summer (his invisible enemies were instilling sorrow into his soul, disquieting him with the fear of impending famine and the specter of premature death). But the Venerable Father, reflecting within himself, called to mind the words spoken by the Lord Himself in His holy Gospel: "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you: for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Mt. 6:31, 34, 33, 32). Placing all his hope upon God, the Provider, the Venerable

Father comforted himself with the words of the Psalmist: "Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee" (Ps. 54:23). Thus comforting himself, the Venerable Father drove away all despondency, which the enemy of our salvation instilled into his heart.

And indeed, God did not forsake His servant who hoped in Him. He sent to him two men who had with them a basket of bread, flour and oil (the people who lived on the seashore had the custom of taking a supply of food with them in winter when they went somewhere inland). Offering the basket of food to the Venerable Father, these two unknown men said to him:

"Take and eat from this basket, honorable father, as much as you wish; we will come to you when God commands us."

Having said this, the unknown men at once disappeared, so that the Venerable Father did not have time to ask who they were and whence they had come.

A long time passed, but the unknown men did not come to the Venerable Father. Then the Venerable Zosimas understood that this had been a visitation of God upon him, and with his whole heart he thanked the Lord for His providential care and the unexpected gift from on high.

When the winter ended, the elder Herman came and brought with him a certain layman named Mark, by occupation a fisherman; at the same time Herman brought a sufficient quantity of food, as well as the nets needed for catching fish.

Some time later Mark received the monastic habit; after that many laymen began to come to the ascetics and built cells for themselves here, feeding themselves by the labor of their hands.

Soon after this the Venerable Zosimas built a small church in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, in commemoration of His glorious Transfiguration. This church was built on the very place where the Venerable Father had seen in the air the Church and the ray of light that shone upon it. Then the Venerable Father added a small refectory to the church and thus established a common monastic life on the island.

After this the Venerable Father sent one of the brethren to Novgorod to Archbishop Jonah to ask his blessing for the consecration of the church, and also for an abbot for the newly established monastery. The archbishop soon sent to the Venerable Father both his blessing and an abbot, the hieromonk Paul. Having received the archpastoral blessing and the abbot, the Venerable Zosimas, the Blessed Herman and all the brethren rejoiced with great joy. Soon afterwards the church was consecrated to the glory of God, and thus the honorable and glorious Solovetsky monastery began its existence.

However, some time later Abbot Paul, being unable to bear the labors of the desert life, left the monastery and returned to Novgorod. After him Theodosius was abbot, but he too, after some time, also left the desert. Then the brethren agreed with the Venerable Father not to take an abbot from other monasteries, but to choose an abbot from among themselves. The brethren resolved to elect the Venerable Zosimas as abbot.

Meanwhile some of the brethren went to Novgorod and asked the Archbishop of Novgorod to summon the abbot they had chosen and to ordain him to this sacred rank, even if he did not wish to accept this honorable obligation.

The archpastor, fulfilling the brethren's desire, sent a letter to the Venerable Father summoning him; then, when Zosimas came to him, he persuaded him to accept the rank of abbot, and after speaking words of exhortation, dismissed him with honor.

When the Venerable Father left Novgorod for his monastery, many of the citizens of Novgorod supplied him with everything needed for the common life of the monastery: vessels, garments, money and food. Arriving at his monastery in the rank of abbot, the Venerable Father was met by the brethren with great joy.

During the Venerable Father's celebration of the first Liturgy in the monastery, a miracle occurred, visible to all: the face of the Venerable Father was illumined by the grace of the Holy Spirit and became bright as the face of an Angel; at the same time the church was filled with fragrance. This was as it were a testimony that the Venerable Father had

worthily received the rank of priesthood and abbacy. And all the brethren rejoiced over such a shepherd, filled with the grace of God.

At that time some merchants happened to be in the church. The Venerable Father gave them a prosphora from his own celebration of the Liturgy; but through carelessness they let it fall to the ground. Brother Macarius, passing along the road, noticed the prosphora lying on the ground, and saw a dog standing beside it and intending to devour it, but scorched by fire. Taking up the prosphora, the brother brought it to the Venerable Father and told the brethren all that he had seen; they marveled at what had happened and glorified God.

Seeing that the number of brethren was increasing more and more, so that the church could no longer hold all who gathered for prayer, the Venerable Father built a larger church, which could hold them all, and also set up many new cells.

Some years later the Venerable Father remembered the Blessed Sabbatius, who had labored much on the same island, and grieved that his honorable relics rested in another place, by the river Vyga, where he had reposed, and not where the Venerable Zosimas himself had already spent many years with the brethren in desert labors. Therefore he began to consult with the brethren about how the relics of the Venerable Sabbatius might be translated here. While the Venerable Father was still taking counsel about this with the brethren, there came to him a letter from the monastery of the Most Holy Theotokos on the White Lake, brought by one of the monks of the monastery of the Venerable Cyril, written in the name of Abbot Cyril and the brethren. The letter read as follows:

"Grace and mercy from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ to our beloved in Christ, the spiritual shepherd, the God-loving Abbot Zosimas and the brethren: may you always rejoice. We have heard from people who came to us from you that the island of Solovki, never before settled by men since the sun shone in the heavens because of the difficulty of sailing to it, has now been settled by monks by the providence of God and the intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos. We have heard that by your labor a monastery has been established on the island in honor of the Transfiguration of the Lord God and our Savior Jesus

Christ, in which many brethren already labor; we have heard that all things with you have been arranged by the prayers of the Most Holy Theotokos. You lack only one thing: near you there are no relics of the Venerable Sabbatius, who earlier than you labored in many monastic toils on that island and lived a life of high virtue, like the ancient Fathers and ascetics. Loving Christ with his whole soul, he withdrew from the world and received a blessed end in the Lord. Some of the brethren of our monastery who were in Novgorod heard from a pious man named John that when he was sailing the sea for trade and was at the river Vyga, he was granted to see the Venerable Sabbatius alive and to hear from him a spiritual teaching. John said that when the Venerable Sabbatius departed his soul to God, his honorable body was buried by Abbot Nathanael with due honors. John also told the brethren of a miracle that occurred at sea, when God, through the prayers of the Venerable Sabbatius, saved from drowning him and his brother Theodore; John also related many other things, and that at the tomb of the Venerable many kinds of healings and miracles take place, for the Venerable Sabbatius was pleasing to God. We ourselves are witnesses of his virtuous life, for this blessed father lived with us a sufficient number of years in the monastery of the Most Pure Theotokos at the Monastery of Cyril. Therefore we now write to your holiness and give you counsel: do not deprive yourselves of such a gift, but with reverence translate to yourselves the honorable relics of the Venerable Sabbatius, that they may be laid where he himself labored for many years. Rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ, and pray for us, that God through the intercession of the Venerable may deliver us from all the afflictions that surround us."

When the Blessed Zosimas, Abbot of Solovki, read this letter aloud to all the brethren, he and all the brethren rejoiced in spirit and all together, as if with one mouth, said:

"This is not from men, but from God Himself!"

And at once, having prepared a ship for the voyage, they set off in it for the other shore, which they reached quickly with a favorable wind. Arriving at the church built on the bank of the river Vyga, the brethren dug up the grave of the Venerable Sabbatius, and at once the air was

filled with fragrance. When they opened the coffin, they saw that corruption had not touched either the body or the garments of the saint. Amazed, the brethren glorified God and carried the honorable relics to the ship, singing sacred songs. Then, with a favorable wind blowing, the brethren set out on the voyage and soon reached their monastery, rejoicing and giving thanks to God, who had granted them such a spiritual treasure as the relics of the Venerable Sabbatius. They were laid behind the sanctuary of the church of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos, in a specially prepared chapel.[24] And all the sick who came to the tomb of the Venerable with faith received healing from their infirmities. The Blessed Zosimas came every night to the tomb of the Venerable Sabbatius and prayed there fervently, making many prostrations until morning. The merchant John mentioned above, who had once assisted at the burial of St. Sabbatius and had a great love for him for having saved him and his brother Theodore from perishing at sea, painted an icon of the Venerable and brought it to Abbot Zosimas, at the same time donating to the monastery many things needed by the brethren. Abbot Zosimas, receiving the honorable image of the Venerable Sabbatius, kissed it and placed it above the relics of the Venerable. Then, turning to the image as to the Venerable himself, he said:

"Servant of God! Although you have ended this temporal life, having died in body, do not in spirit withdraw from us! Guide us to Christ God, teaching us to walk in the way of the commandments of the Lord and to bear patiently our cross in the footsteps of our Master and Lord. You, Venerable Father, having boldness before the Lord Jesus Christ and His Most Pure Mother, be an intercessor and advocate for us unworthy ones dwelling in this holy monastery, of which you were the founder. Be our helper and defender before God, that we, dwelling in this place, may remain unharmed by demons and evil men through your prayers, glorifying the Holy Trinity, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

Seeing the flourishing of the Solovki monastery, which increased day by day with new arrivals and was adorned with new virtuous

24. The honorable relics of Venerable Sabbatius were translated in 1465.

monks, as well as the labors of the Venerable Zosimas, the devil, the enemy of all good, was inflamed with envy of the monks. But since he could do nothing to the monastery himself, for he was always driven off and put to shame by the Blessed Zosimas and the other valiant ascetics, he resorted to the help of evil men, stirring in them the desire to do evil and wrong to the holy monastery. At the devil's instigation, many of the servants of boyars and nobles, and inhabitants of the Karelian land, began to come to the Solovki island; they fished in the lakes, while forbidding the monks to fish for the monastery's needs. These men called themselves masters of that island; they reviled the Venerable Zosimas and the other monks with abusive words and caused them much trouble, promising to ruin the monastery and drive the monks out of it entirely. Therefore the Venerable Zosimas had to go to Novgorod to Archbishop Theophilus, to ask him for help and protection against the wrongdoers. Taking some of his disciples, he set off with them for Novgorod, and coming to the archbishop, bowed to him and presented to him the petition of the monastery, which was suffering afflictions from evil men. The archbishop said to him: "With God's help, honorable father, I am always ready to assist your monastery in every way; but first of all you must ask for help from the boyars and nobles who govern our city."

The Venerable Zosimas went to the boyars, and going from house to house, earnestly asked them to defend the monastery and not allow evil men to ruin it. All the boyars who governed the city promised their help to the Venerable.

It also fell to the Venerable Zosimas to visit a boyar widow named Martha, since her servants, as well as the peasants living on her lands, greatly oppressed the monks. When her servants told her that the Venerable had come to her, she ordered him driven from the house with dishonor. The humble servant of God patiently bore this insult and said to his disciples: "The days will come when the inhabitants of this house will no longer walk in their courtyard: the doors of this house will be shut and will not open again, and this house will be left desolate."

In its time what the Venerable had foretold came to pass.

Meanwhile the archbishop called the boyars to him and told them of all the wrongs and troubles done to the monastery of the Venerable Zosimas by the servants and dependents of the boyars. The boyars, unanimously resolving to give their help and support to the Venerable, transferred to his possession the whole of that island; the boyars confirmed the right of possession of the island by a paper, to which they affixed eight seals: the first from the archbishop, the second from the posadnik, the third from the commander of a thousand, and five more seals from the five ends of the city. Besides this, the boyars endowed the Venerable with everything necessary for the monastery: vessels for worship, sacred vestments, gold and silver, and also a large supply of provisions, and promised henceforth to help the monastery in every way.

Having heard all this, and also learning of the virtuous life of the Venerable Zosimas, the aforementioned boyarina Martha understood that she had had a true servant of God in her house. Repenting, she sent her servant to the Venerable Father, inviting him to a feast at her home. As soon as the Venerable Father entered her house, she received his blessing together with her children, and seated him in the place of honor. While all the guests at the feast ate and drank a great deal, diverting themselves, the Venerable Father, according to his custom, took very little food and sat all the while quietly and meekly. Looking, however, at the boyars seated at the table, he was greatly astonished, for he beheld a terrible sight; then he lowered his face and said nothing to anyone. Looking a second time, the Venerable Father saw the same and again lowered his face, and finally, a third time, he saw the same terrible sight, namely, he saw without heads six of the most important boyars who were seated with him at the table. The Venerable Father was amazed at what he saw, wondering how those men could feast without their heads. But he at once understood what this vision signified, and, bowing his head, he sighed, shed tears, and from that time on he took nothing more of what was offered him, despite the insistent entreaties of those who entertained him.

After the feast, Martha asked the Venerable Father's forgiveness for the offense she had done him, gave his monastery a plot of land on the

river Suma, and then dismissed him in peace. When the Venerable Father left her house, one of his disciples, named Daniel, who was especially beloved by the Venerable Father, asked him insistently:

"Why, during the feast, when you looked three times at the boyars seated at the table, did you lower your face, and, sighing, shed tears, and afterward take nothing of what was offered you?"

The Venerable Father answered him:

"Child! You ask too insistently, as the prophet Elisha asked the prophet Elijah[25]; therefore I will not hide from you the unspeakable judgments of God that are to be accomplished in the future. Yet what I tell you, you must keep in secret until the judgments of God are fulfilled. I saw six of the most important boyars sitting at the feast without their heads; and seeing this I was horrified, and therefore I could neither eat nor drink. I think these men will be beheaded soon. But take heed, child, tell no one what you have heard from me."

Then the Venerable Father returned to his monastery with the land deed and with many gifts that had been bestowed upon him in Novgorod.

Some time later the Venerable Father heard that the Grand Prince of Moscow, Ivan Vasilyevich[26], coming to Novgorod with a large army, put to death some of the boyars, to strike fear into the rest; namely, those six boyars whom the Venerable Father had seen sitting without their heads at the feast in the house of the boyarina Martha were beheaded by the sword. The boyarina Martha herself, by the command of the Grand Prince, was exiled with her children and imprisoned in Nizhny Novgorod; her estate was plundered. Thus her house was laid waste, according to the prophecy of the Venerable Zosimas, as the Venerable Father had foretold at the hour when he was driven with dishonor from her house.

When the Venerable Father had lived long enough on earth, had labored much and had grown accustomed to every virtue, the time of his blessed end drew near. The Venerable Father had prepared a coffin

25. Concerning the bestowal upon him of the spirit of prophecy in a double measure in comparison with the spirit of Elijah (4 Kgdms. 2:9–13).

26. Ivan Vasilyevich IV (the Terrible) reigned from 1533 to 1584.

in advance, and often gazing upon it he wept, always thinking of death and constantly preparing himself for it. Sensing his approaching end, exhausted by labors and old age, the Venerable Father gathered the brethren to himself and said to them:

"Behold, children and brethren, I am departing from this temporal life, entrusting you to the All-merciful God and the Most Pure Theotokos. Tell me: whom do you wish to have as abbot after me?"

All the brethren, weeping aloud, said with one voice:

"We would wish, our father and shepherd, to die together with you. But this is not in our power, for the judgment of God is not the same as the judgment of men. He who has told you of your departure to the heavenly abodes, the Lord Christ, our God, He can give us also a teacher who will guide us to salvation. But let your prayers protect us, and let your blessing rest upon us, for you are our father in the Lord. And as in this life you cared for us, so, we beseech you, intercede for us also after your departure to God. Do not leave us orphans."

Having said this, the brethren fell silent, but did not cease weeping and sobbing. The Venerable Father again said to them:

"Children! I repeat again that I entrust you to the Lord and His Most Pure Mother; and let Arsenius be your abbot, for he is a most worthy man and the most capable of governing the monastery and the brethren."

Having said this, the Venerable Father handed the abbacy to Arsenius and said to him:

"Behold, brother, I choose you as builder and leader of this holy monastery and of all the brethren gathered here. Watch carefully that none of the monastic ordinances, contained in the apostolic teaching and the tradition of the Fathers, be forgotten, such as those concerning the common singing of the Church, concerning eating and drinking at table, and concerning the whole monastic rule as I have handed it down. See that everything in the monastery remains unimpaired. May the Lord direct you all to the keeping of His commandments, through the prayers of our Most Holy Lady and Sovereign, the Theotokos, and of all the saints, and also through the prayers of His servant, the Venerable Sabbatius. May our Lord Jesus Christ preserve you from all the

snares of the enemy and strengthen you in His divine love. As for me, though I depart from you in body, paying the natural debt of death, in spirit I shall remain with you unceasingly. And I would very much wish, if I have found grace before God, that after my departure from you this monastery may grow still more, that a multitude of brethren united in love for Christ may gather here, and that here both spiritual gifts may abound and there may be sufficiency also in the things necessary for the existence of the body."

Having spoken thus, the Venerable Father instructed the brethren in the virtuous life for a sufficient time longer. Then, kissing and blessing each of the brethren, the blessed one raised his hands to heaven and began to pray for the monastery and for all his flock, and also for himself. Then, making the sign of the cross over himself, the Venerable Father, turning to the brethren, said:

"Peace be with you!"

Then, lifting his eyes to heaven, the saint said:

"O Lord who lovest mankind, vouchsafe that I may stand at Thy right hand when Thou comest in Thy glory to judge the living and the dead and to render to each according to his deeds."

Having spoken these words, the saint lay down upon his bed and gave up his holy soul into the hands of his Lord, whom he had loved with all his soul and all his heart, and to whom from his earliest years he had labored, toiling in the ascetic struggles of well-doing[27].

The repose of the Venerable Father was bitterly lamented by the brethren of his monastery; at last, singing the hymns fitting for burial, the brethren laid the honorable body of the Venerable Father in the grave, which he, while still alive, had dug with his own hands, behind the sanctuary of the Church of the Transfiguration of the Lord. Here afterward the brethren built a chapel over the relics of the Venerable Father, placed icons and lamps here, and, coming here, offered prayer to the Venerable Father. At the tomb of the Venerable Father signs and miracles were repeatedly wrought, for the Venerable Father himself, as

27. The repose of Venerable Zosimas took place in 1478. On August 8, 1566, his relics were solemnly translated to a chapel of the cathedral church in the name of Zosimas and Sabbatius, where they rest even now in a silver reliquary.

his soul departed to the Lord, had told the brethren that he would not forsake the place where he had labored, but promised to remain in spirit with his disciples; and indeed the Venerable Father fulfilled his promise, visiting from the heavenly abodes his earthly dwelling and being present about it invisibly; sometimes the saint also appeared in visible form, both on land and at sea, helping all who were in need. Many times the Venerable Father appeared to those sailing on the sea when they were in danger, calmed the storm and saved the ships from sinking; at times the Venerable Father appeared in the church to those praying, among the ranks of the other brethren. Soon after his repose the Venerable Father appeared on the ninth day after his death to the monk Daniel and told him how, by the mercy of God, he had passed fearlessly by the airy spirits, escaped their snares, and had been numbered among the choir of the saints.

Then the Venerable Father appeared visibly to the elder Tarasius at his tomb, and likewise to Gerasimus, his disciple. To the latter the Venerable Father appeared on a Sunday, after Matins, and presented himself as though walking from the tomb of the Venerable Sabbatius to his own tomb; the saint, looking upon Gerasimus, said to him:

"Labor on, child, and you will receive the reward for your labors."

To the same Gerasimus the Venerable Father appeared a second time during the Divine Liturgy on Maundy Thursday; the Venerable Father was then among those praying in the church. When the brethren began to receive Communion, the Venerable Zosimas said to Gerasimus:

"Go and you too receive Communion."

Then the Venerable Father stood the whole time beside the chalice from which the brethren were communing, and when all had communed, he suddenly became invisible.

Once, when the hieromonk Dositheus, standing at the evening prayer in the narthex of the church, was praying for a certain brother who was possessed by a demon, the Venerable one appeared to him and said:

"The healing of the brother for whom you are praying will not serve for his spiritual benefit; it is necessary that this brother remain for some time longer in the same suffering."

A certain elder, Theodulus, having slipped by chance, fell to the ground and was severely bruised, so that he could no longer walk to the usual prayer rule, but was obliged to remain in bed all the while. The Venerable Zosimas once came late in the evening to his cell, and having entered it, after prayer, healed him.

From these and many similar instances the brethren were convinced with their own eyes that the Venerable Father had not forgotten the place where he had labored during his earthly life, for he did not withhold help from any of the brethren in distress, but gave swift aid to everyone who called upon him in faith.

One of the monks of the monastery, named Mitrophan, related to the brethren that when he was still in the world, being a merchant who sailed the sea, a storm once arose so violent that the waves nearly covered his ship, and all who were aboard, despairing of their lives, began to pray tearfully to the Lord and to His Most Pure Mother for help. The ship was carried over the waves for thirty days. The travelers remembered the Venerable Zosimas, the Wonderworker of Solovki, and called upon him for help. Soon they saw the Venerable Father sitting at the stern of the ship and striking the waves with his mantle; by this the tumult was stilled. And the Venerable Father steered the ship until it reached the shore. After this the wondrous helmsman vanished from the ship.

It happened that the monk Elisha, while sailing on the sea, fell gravely ill and wished to receive the schema, but before he could reach the shore he died. The Venerable Zosimas raised him from the dead, and that monk lived until he had received the schema and partaken of the Holy Mysteries; then the monk again fell asleep in the Lord.

A layman named Nikon was severely tormented by demons. When he was brought to the relics of the Venerable Father, the latter appeared to him and, freeing him from his affliction, sent him home healthy.

A certain farmer who had gone blind came to the tomb of the Venerable Father, received healing, and began to see. However, because of his little faith, that farmer went blind a second time. Coming again to the tomb of the Venerable Father and praying with repentance, the farmer received healing a second time. The Venerable Father healed many other sick people as well, for he never refused his help to all who came to him in faith.

The Venerable Zosimas appeared to many people not only alone but also together with the Venerable Sabbatius. For example, once Brother Joseph, being on the island of Kuzov (thirty versts from the Solovki island), went up a hill at night to pray; looking in the direction of the Solovki monastery, he saw in the midst of the monastery two pillars of fire rising from the earth and reaching to heaven. When this brother related what he had seen to the other brethren, they said: "These are the founders and leaders of the Solovki monastery, Zosimas and Sabbatius, shining forth from their tombs, for they are spiritual pillars, enlightened by the dawn of the grace of God."

Two brethren, Sabbatius and Ferapont, after the conclusion of the Great Lent were sent for the needs of the monastery to Virma, for there was a monastic farmstead where various provisions were stored. Sailing, the travelers drew near the island of Shuzhmuy, which lies sixty versts from the Solovki island; at that time one of the travelers, Sabbatius, saw on that island two pillars of fire, not especially large. Approaching the island, the travelers saw a small hut, and in it two men, naked and hungry, grievously afflicted in their feet, barely alive. At the beginning of winter these two men had been sailing on the sea, but when a storm arose their ship was broken by the waves; having reached the shore, they landed and wintered there, since they met no one who would take them away from there. When these unfortunate men saw the monks, they asked them:

"Who are you? Could it be that the elders of Solovki have sent you to us?"

Sabbatius and Ferapont then asked them:

"Of what Solovki elders are you speaking?"

The sick men answered them:

"Two honorable elders have visited us here; one of them is named Sabbatius and the other Zosimas. When they came to us, our sufferings were eased; we felt neither hunger nor cold. Today they were with us before your arrival and said to us: 'Do not grieve, soon we will send for you.'"

Hearing this, those monks marveled, and having strengthened the sick with food, carried them onto their own ship, and then took them to the monastery.

The Venerable Zosimas and Sabbatius healed a woman possessed by a demon, named Maria, who had a husband named Onesimus. Likewise the Venerable Fathers raised from the dead another woman, the daughter of Jeremiah, formerly a servant of Zosimas, who, at the instigation of demons, had slain herself. Even her wounds were completely healed, for the Venerable Fathers appeared to her in a dream after raising her, gave her in her hands a vessel with a certain ointment, and said:

"Anoint your wounds, for for the sake of the tears of your father and mother we have come to heal you."

The maiden, having carried out the saints' command (which had been in the dream), was completely restored to health within three days.

A certain Basil, formerly a brigand, having repented, came to the Solovki monastery and received here the monastic rank. But after some time, tempted by the devil, he planned to flee from the monastery. Having prepared a boat, he secretly placed in it some of the monastery's things – books, garments and vessels – and intended to escape from the monastery at night. Then he put in at Anzersky island, which lay fifteen versts from the monastery; here an irresistible sleep fell upon him; having tied the boat to the shore, that monk lay down on the ground and fell asleep. In a dream vision both Venerable Fathers appeared to him; one of them, Zosimas, looking at him with anger, said to him:

"Wretch! You are robbing me! I build, and you ruin!"

Basil, in that vision, asked the Venerable Father for forgiveness, to which the Venerable Father replied:

"You shall receive forgiveness, but you shall remain in this place for three days."

Awaking, Basil saw no one, and he also found no boat tied at the shore; then, sitting on the ground, he wept bitterly, intending not to depart from here before the three days were ended.

Meanwhile some merchants sailing past that island took the monk from there and brought him to the monastery, where the latter, having repented, lamented his sin before the brotherhood and related the appearance to him of the Venerable Fathers.

About this time the monastery's fishermen were fishing in the river Umba, at a distance of some five hundred versts from the island. Their leader was the elder Photius. The Venerable Fathers appeared to him in a dream and said:

"Behold, we have brought you a boat for fishing, for we know that you need yet another boat for fishing; only see that you lose nothing of what is in it, but bring everything in it safely to the monastery."

Awaking, Photius told the other fishermen of his vision. Going to the shore, the fishermen indeed saw a boat there, and in it many things belonging to the monastery. These things the fishermen afterwards brought to the monastery and related here the appearance of the Venerable Fathers.

A certain man named Theodore, who lived on the seashore near the river Suma, related the following:

"It happened to me," he said, "to sail the sea with merchandise. Suddenly a violent storm arose; having dropped anchor and held our position, greatly troubled, we turned to God in prayer, calling at the same time for help upon the Venerable Zosimas and Sabbatius. I went inside the ship and dozed off, and suddenly I saw two elders, of goodly countenance, standing on the ship and saying to the helmsman: 'Turn the ship's prow into the wind.' Immediately awaking, I went to the men bailing water out of the ship. One of them, very tired, had fallen asleep, and awaking, said to me: 'Just now I saw two elders in the ship, conversing with one another, and one of them said to the other: "Watch over this ship, brother, for I am hastening to Solovki for the liturgy." And we, hearing this, marveled and rejoiced greatly, for now we began to hope for deliverance from perdition. And indeed, soon the storm

abated, a calm set in, and we went on our way, glorifying and thanking God and His saints.'"

The elder Philemon related the following:

"When I lived in the desert as a hermit, sometimes a strong despondency fell upon me through the working of the devil; and the cause of this despondency was as follows: one of the brethren had entrusted to me for safekeeping his money, twelve coins; after some time that money, somehow, disappeared. That brother, learning of this, was greatly grieved; I too was grieved and sorrowful for several days. Once, after I had finished my rule and, sitting down, had dozed off a little, two elders entered my cell. I said to them: 'Why have you come in without prayer?' They answered me: 'No, we have said the prayer; perhaps you did not hear it.' Then I said to them: 'Sit down, my lords.' Then I said: 'Who are you? Are you not elders of our monastery? I do not know you.' One of them said to me: 'I am called Zosimas, and this one is Sabbatius. Do not grieve, brother, over the thing that has gone missing from you, for it will be found.' These Venerable Fathers spoke to me of many other things, consoling me, and afterwards became invisible. But I, awaking, saw no one; yet my sorrow had passed, and I felt joy in my heart. And the money that had disappeared was found in the very place where it had been put. I too was comforted, and my brother, and we together offered praise and thanksgiving to God and to the Venerable Fathers Zosimas and Sabbatius."

Many other miracles were wrought by these Venerable Fathers, the leaders of the Solovki monastery; and let those mentioned here serve for the spiritual benefit of our souls, and for the glorification of the saints of God, and also for the glorification of our Lord Jesus Christ, glorified together with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever. Amen.

Troparion, Tone 4:

By the will of Divine Wisdom thou didst settle in the wilderness, and there, fixing thy mind upon the heavenly mansions, thou didst live upon earth as the equal of the Angels, in prayers and labors and fastings, becoming a model for thy disciples. Therefore God, seeing thy good intention, multiplied thy children in the

wilderness, watered by the streams of thy tears. But, having boldness toward God, remember the flock which thou hast gathered, O wise one, and forget not what thou didst promise, visiting thy children, Venerable Father of ours, Zosimas.

Kontakion, Tone 8:

Wounded with the love of Christ, O Venerable Father, thou didst take up on thy shoulder His glorious Cross, and, divinely armed, thou didst carry it, and, holding unceasing prayers as a spear in thy hand, thou didst firmly cut down the armies of the demons. Wherefore we cry to thee: Rejoice, Venerable Father Zosimas, adornment of monks.

* * *

Commemoration of our holy father Agapetus, Pope of Rome

Память во святых отца нашего Агапита, папы Римского

St. Agapetus, Pope of Rome,[28] was sent by the Gothic king Theodoric the Great,[29] who then ruled Italy, to Constantinople to the emperor Justinian[30] to negotiate peace. On his journey he met a man who suffered from two infirmities: he was dumb in his tongue and lame in his feet. Taking him by the hand, St. Agapetus healed him of his lameness; then, having given him Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, he loosed his tongue.

While staying in Constantinople, St. Agapetus saw there a blind man sitting by the so-called Golden Gates and begging alms. Having compassion on him, St. Agapetus laid his right hand upon his eyes, after which the blind man received his sight.

During St. Agapetus' stay in Constantinople, by the command of the emperor Justinian a local council[31] was assembled here, at which Patri-

28. St. Agapetus was Pope of Rome from 535 to 536.
29. Theodoric the Great, king of the Ostrogoths, reigned from 485 to 536. The Ostrogoths lived between the rivers Dnieper and Don and formed the eastern branch of the Gothic people, which in the 4th century divided into Ostrogoths and Visigoths.
30. The Roman emperor Justinian I reigned from 527 to 565.

arch Anthimus[32] was deposed, having been raised to the patriarchal throne unlawfully and contrary to the canons of the Church.[33] In place of the deposed Anthimus there was raised a certain presbyter named Mena, who led a holy and strictly ascetic life. At the same council the heresy of Severus[34] was also condemned.

Shortly after this St. Agapetus reposed in the Lord[35] and was buried in Constantinople.

* * *



31. This was in 536.
32. Anthimus I was patriarch from 535 to 536.
33. Anthimus was a convinced Monophysite and hypocritically accepted Orthodoxy only in order to obtain the Patriarchal throne of Constantinople. The Monophysites wrongly taught the union in Jesus Christ of two natures; namely, they said that the divine nature in Jesus Christ had swallowed up the human nature. The heresy of the Monophysites is also called Eutychianism, after its founder, the Constantinopolitan archimandrite Eutyches. This heresy was condemned at the Fourth Ecumenical Council, held in 451 at Chalcedon.
34. Severus, Patriarch of Antioch (512 to 519), belonged to the number of the "moderate" Monophysites; the distinction of his teaching from that of the other Monophysites was that he acknowledged the body of Jesus Christ to be "of like substance" with ours and subject to corruption.
35. The repose of St. Agapetus took place in 536.

THE EIGHTEENTH DAY OF APRIL

April 18

18 апреля

New Calendar April 18 · Old Calendar May 1 (civil dates)

Memory of Our Venerable Father John, Disciple of St. Gregory the Decapolite

Память преподобного отца нашего Иоанна, ученика святого Григория Декаполита

We know of two countries bearing the name Decapolis.[1] One of them lay in Palestine, near Galilee;[2] of it the holy Evangelist Matthew speaks, saying: "And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan" (Mt. 4:25).

The name Decapolis was also given to another small country, situated in Isauria.[3] It was from this latter Isaurian Decapolis that the Venerable Gregory, teacher of the Venerable John whose memory is celebrated on this day, came forth. Having renounced this world from his early years and loved Christ, the Venerable John withdrew to his aforementioned teacher Gregory the Decapolite, and, receiving from him the tonsure into the monastic order, he labored together with him, pleasing God by his virtuous life. He attained such humility, obedience, and in general such spiritual perfection, that his teacher, the holy Gregory himself, rejoiced over him and glorified God.

When the impious Emperor Leo the Armenian,[4] renewing the iconoclastic heresy, raised persecution against the Church of Christ, the

1. Decapolis – the Ten Cities, a league of several cities.
2. Galilee (region, district) – a country lying in the north of Palestine. Its boundaries were: on the north, Syria and the Lebanon mountains; on the west, Phoenicia; on the east, the river Jordan; and on the south, Samaria. Galilee was divided into Upper (or Northern) and Lower (or Southern).
3. Isauria – the southern mountainous part of Lycaonia, a region of Asia Minor.
4. Emperor Leo (V) the Armenian reigned over the Byzantine Empire from 813 to 820.

Venerable John, together with his teacher Gregory and St. Joseph the Hymnographer, also came to the city at that time. Going about the city, they strengthened the Orthodox, exhorting them to hold firmly and to confess manfully the holy Christian faith. Shortly after this, Joseph set out for Rome,[5] but on the way he was seized by heretics and cast into prison in Crete.[6] The Venerable Gregory the Decapolite, after Joseph's departure, died in Rome.[7]

Remaining in Byzantium, the Venerable John labored as before, caring not only for his own salvation but also for the salvation of other people.

Some years later, when the blessed Joseph, having been released from captivity, returned to Byzantium, the Venerable John had already departed to the Lord,[8] that he might receive from Him the reward for his labors, and he was buried by Joseph's hands near the tomb of his father, who was likewise named Joseph. Afterwards his body was transferred to another place, of which the following is related in the Life of St. Joseph the Hymnographer:

"On entering the city," it is said here, "Joseph did not find alive his beloved teacher, St. Gregory the Decapolite. The latter had already gone to the Lord. He saw only the disciple of Gregory, the blessed John, and he wept long over Gregory, because he had not been granted to see him once more. He remained near his tomb together with St. John; but after some time John also departed to the Lord, and Joseph buried him near the tomb of St. Gregory. After this the Venerable Joseph moved to another secluded and quiet place, situated outside the city, not far from the church of St. John Chrysostom. Settling here, the Venerable Joseph built a church in honor of the Hierarch of Christ, Nicholas, and into it he translated the relics of Sts. Gregory and John."

Some maintain that this Venerable John, disciple of St. Gregory the Decapolite, after the repose of his teacher withdrew to Palestine and labored here in the monastery of St. Chariton, where he also fell asleep

5. Rome – the principal city of the Italian state, standing on the river Tiber.
6. Crete – one of the large islands of the Mediterranean Sea.
7. The repose of St. Gregory the Decapolite took place about 820.
8. The repose of St. John took place about 820.

in the Lord. But this refers to another saint of the name John, who indeed labored in the monastery of St. Chariton at the time when that monastery was in a flourishing state.[9] The St. John commemorated now, however, lived many years after that John, in the reign of the iconoclast Emperor Leo the Armenian, when in Palestine the monastery of St. Chariton no longer existed. The latter had been finally laid waste by the Muslims in the reign of Constantine and Irene,[10] who lived many years before Leo the Armenian; this destruction is mentioned in the narrative of the passion of the venerable fathers slain in the monastery of the Venerable Sabbas, in the Suk-monastery of St. Chariton, the "Old Lavra." Here it is reported that at the time when the slaughter of the fathers of the monastery of St. Sabbas took place, the monastery of St. Chariton was also finally laid waste, and it was never restored afterwards, but fell into complete desolation; from this it is evident how the St. John commemorated now could have dwelt in that utterly ruined and deserted monastery of Chariton and died in it. Moreover, the Life of the Venerable Joseph the Hymnographer relates that this blessed Joseph with his own hands committed to burial the body of the St. John commemorated now in Byzantium, and afterwards transferred it to another place, not far from the first.

The memory of St. John the Cave-dweller of Old is celebrated on 19 April.

* * *

Commemoration of the Holy Martyrs Victor, Zoticus, Zeno, Acindynus and Severian

Память святых мучеников Виктора, Зотика, Зинона, Акиндина и Севериана

At the time when the impious Emperor Diocletian[11] raised a cruel persecution against the Christians, St. George was seized and subjected without mercy to torture. During his tortures, by the power of God, St. George worked wondrous miracles, and seeing these,

9. Here John the Cave-Dweller of the Old Cave is meant.
10. Emperor Constantine reigned over Byzantium from 780 to 797, and St. Irene (his mother) from 797 to 802.
11. Emperor Diocletian reigned over the Roman Empire from 284 to 305.

many of the pagans believed in Christ. But those who believed were immediately subjected to torment at the hands of the impious: some of them were sent to prisons, others were burned with fire, and others were beheaded with the sword. Among such were these holy martyrs: Victor, Zoticus, Zeno, Acindynus and Severian. Seeing St. George bound to the wheel (which was to tear his body) and suffering no harm from it, they believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, for which the tormentors immediately cut off their heads.[12]

* * *

Passion of the Holy Martyr John the New

Страдание святого мученика Иоанна Нового

The homeland of the blessed John was the city of Ioannina,[13] situated in the Greek region called Epirus.[14] This city was once the permanent residence of the Greek king Pyrrhus.[15] The parents of St. John were pious Christians. Having been left an orphan in his youth after their death, John came to Constantinople, with the intention of obtaining by the labor of his hands the necessary means of livelihood here. He had here, as the other craftsmen and merchants did, a place in the public square, and thus supported himself by his trade, having enough of everything necessary. God helped him in all his affairs, since he led a virtuous life and strictly fulfilled the law of God. The inhabitants of Constantinople called him "the Epirote," since he was a native of Epirus.

At that time Constantinople was already under the rule of the Muslims,[16] who professed the Muhammadan faith. Many even of the Christians, seduced by the Muhammadan impiety, turned away to Muhammadanism; especially many craftsmen and merchants, who had

12. The martyrs' death took place in 303.
13. The city of Ioannina or Yanina was situated in Epirus, between Trikka of Thessalonica and Amvrakia of Epirus, to the south.
14. Epirus – the eastern part of northern Greece, extending from the Akrokeraunian Mountains to the Ambracian Gulf of the Ionian Sea.
15. Pyrrhus, king of Epirus from 295 to 272 B.C. This king is known for his wars against Rome and Sparta.
16. Constantinople was taken by the Muslims in 1453.

previously professed the Christian faith, but afterwards passed over to Muhammadanism.

The true Christian, the blessed John, had to live among such people. On all sides his neighbors in trade were apostates who had renounced Christ and joined the Muhammadans; John often openly disputed with them, exposing their apostasy, for he was a sensible young man, bold in speech, who spoke for the truth without fear. For all this the neighbors of John began to hate him. They were also displeased that they saw the saint's success in business. Since John acquired more and more success in his commercial affairs, the other merchants and craftsmen began to envy him and to plot what accusation to bring against him in order to destroy him. But the blessed John, seeing the snares plotted against him, was not dismayed by them, but with all his soul desired even more ardently to suffer for the truth of Christ.

And so, going one day on Good Friday[17] to his spiritual father, the Constantinopolitan protopresbyter, he confessed his sins to him, and also told him of the enmity of the neighbors who were raging against him and seeking his destruction, and also told him of his desire to suffer for Christ, asking his spiritual father for useful counsel and consolation. Seeing the saint's young age, the protopresbyter did not advise him to give himself up to torment, saying to him:

"Child, first examine carefully whether such a thought is not suggested to you by the devil; for the devil has stirred up many people to martyrdom, intending to deliver them to the shame of the whole world, after which they were unable to endure the tortures and fell away from the faith."

But St. John answered him:

"I hope in my Christ, and firmly believe that He will not give me over to the mockery of my enemies, but will strengthen me by His power, so that I may be able to overcome the power of the enemy."

"Child," said the protopresbyter in reply, "the word of God says: 'The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak' (Mt. 26:41). The undertaking on which you are setting out requires great preparation; it requires

17. This was in 1500.

unceasing fasting and prayers; when you have been cleansed from every sin by the labors of fasting and prayer, then God Himself will tell you how to act, for God usually dwells in pure souls. Therefore, beloved, attend to yourself and go in peace, and I will pray to God that He keep you from all your visible and invisible enemies, from men and demons, and grant you victory over them."

Having said this, the protopresbyter dismissed the young man in peace.

On the very next morning the blessed John again appeared before his spiritual father, with a bright face and a joyful spirit, and said to him:

Honorable Father! Last night I saw myself in a dream standing in the midst of a flame, unscorched but rejoicing and exulting, like the three youths in the Babylonian furnace (see Dan. 3). Therefore I hope that the undertaking I am contemplating will, with the help of the Most High, come to a happy end. I beg you too, Honorable Father: strengthen me with your prayers!

To this his spiritual father said:

May God strengthen you, child, to overcome the hellish wolf, by which I mean the invisible serpent, and may He grant that you be crowned with the crown of martyrdom.

Having strengthened the youth for his ascetic deed with many other tender words, the Protopresbyter dismissed him, promising to pray to God for him.

When Blessed John came to the marketplace, to his shop, his enemies, having first devised a plan for his destruction, began to say to one another:

"Is this not the very man who openly renounced Christ in Trikka[18]? Why then does he here conduct himself as a true Christian?"

Hearing these words, the youth looked sternly at those who were speaking and asked them:

"Are you speaking of me, or perhaps of someone else?"

18. Trikka – a city in Thessaly, a region in north-eastern Greece.

"Of you," they answered, "and of no one else. Are we not telling the truth?"

"Never was it so with me," answered the saint, "and never will it be, that I should renounce Christ my God, whether in Trikka or in any other place. I live and always will live for Christ my God, and I am ready always to die for Him."

Coming into a violent rage at these words of the saint, his enemies rushed upon him quickly, as if ready to put him to death at once, and immediately dragged him to the court. The holy youth walked swiftly, his face shining, as if going to a feast. When the saint was brought before the court, his enemies appeared there as accusers, as witnesses and as judges of the saint. They charged him only with having, in the Thessalian city of Trikka, supposedly renounced Christ openly and embraced the Mohammedan faith, and with having, on coming to Constantinople, again pretended to be a Christian and reviled the Mohammedans. Beginning the interrogation, the saint's enemies first of all showed a feigned and hypocritical compassion for him, as if pitying him, and began tenderly to exhort him to renounce Christ. Then, seeing that he stood unshaken in the Christian faith, they tried to frighten him into renouncing Christianity with threats; but achieving nothing by this means either, they mercilessly beat him and then cast him into prison, intending to keep him there until they decided what to do with him further.

On the next day in the morning, the saint was brought out of prison, and his impious judges asked him whether he had decided to renounce Christ and accept their faith. But seeing that he still unwaveringly confessed Christianity, they again began to beat him without mercy with thick staves. The saint, however, like firm adamant, silently endured the blows inflicted upon him, as if they were beating not him but someone else. He only quietly prayed to God, saying:

"I will by no means in the world renounce my faith; it will never be with me that I should believe otherwise than as befits a Christian; it will never be that I am seduced by caresses or conquered by tortures. Do with me whatever you wish, so that I may the sooner pass from this

short life to eternal life. As Christ's servant, I follow Christ and die for Christ, that I may live with Him forever."

The unrighteous judges ordered the saint again to be cast into prison. The martyr was now no longer led but dragged along the ground; they tore his hair, struck him on the cheeks and trampled him with their feet. At last he was again bound in chains.

On the next day the saint was again brought to trial, but since he boldly continued to say the same things as before, they again began to beat him without mercy. While they were beating him, the martyr joyfully sang the church hymn "Christ is risen from the dead!" and so forth[19], for those were the days of Pascha. The whole body of the saint was covered with wounds, and the ground around him was stained with blood. Meanwhile the holy martyr endured the suffering as if it were not his own body, and during the torments he now sang, now addressed his tormentors with the words:

"Beat, beat me with all your strength, beat me and increase the blows as much as you can; yet nevertheless you will never be able to turn me away from my Christ and make me your fellow-believer."

After this, ashamed, the tormentors again cast the martyr into prison, and there they tormented him for several days with hunger and thirst; then they brought him out of prison again and, seeing that, despite all his torments, he did not change his Christian faith, they condemned him to be burned.

When the saint, bound in iron chains, was led to death, "as a sheep to the slaughter" (Is. 53:7), his tormentors on the way struck him with their hands, hitting him in the face, and insulted him with abusive words; but some of those present expressed their sympathy to him and begged him not to destroy his youth. But the martyr of Christ went to death with great triumph, as if preparing to receive some great honors.

At last St. John reached the place where the tormentors had laid a large pyre. The saint, without waiting to be thrown on the pyre, bravely entered it himself and stood in the very flames. Then the tormentors, seizing the end of the chain with which St. John had been

19. Troparion of holy Pascha.

bound, dragged him out of the fire. But the holy martyr said to the tormentors:

"Why do you not let me burn in the flame? Why do you hinder me from becoming a sacrifice pleasing to Christ?"

Then the judges, although they knew that death by burning with fire is very painful, yet since the saint himself strongly desired such a death, changed their decision and condemned the saint to death not by burning but by beheading with the sword. They ordered the executioner to cut off the head of the invincible youth, and then to throw the severed head together with the body into the pyre. Thus the holy new martyr of Christ, John the Epirote, received the martyr's crown on the eighteenth day of the month of April[20].

Although the saint's body had been burned on the pyre, the faithful found some parts of his bones that had survived the fire; taking them, they kept them with reverence, glorifying Christ our God, who is praised together with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever. Amen.

* * *

Memory of our holy father Cosmas the Confessor, Bishop of Chalcedon, and of the Venerable Auxentius

Память святого отца нашего Космы Исповедника, епископа Халкидонского, и преподобного Авксентия

The hierarch and confessor of Christ, Cosmas, was a native of the city of Constantinople[21]. Loving Christ from his youthful years, he left this vain world and was tonsured a monk. Living a strictly ascetic life and attaining perfection in many virtues, St. Cosmas became a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

Afterward St. Cosmas was appointed bishop of the city of Chalcedon[22]. In the episcopal rank he zealously defended the Orthodox teaching, which at that time was persecuted by the iconoclastic heretics.

20. The martyr's death took place in 1526.

21. Constantinople – the city famous in antiquity, capital of the Byzantine Empire, now the city of Istanbul in Turkey. Constantinople lies on the shore of the Bosporus, a strait of the Mediterranean Sea, and was renowned in antiquity for its learning and commerce.

The iconoclastic heretics repeatedly compelled the saint not to venerate the holy icons. But he bravely defended the Orthodox teaching and did not submit to the heretics.

For his steadfastness in Orthodoxy the saint endured many torments from his persecutors and was exiled into confinement. Summoned from confinement and again compelled to refuse veneration of the icons, St. Cosmas again showed steadfastness in Orthodoxy. For this he was again subjected to numerous torments and afflictions, which the Venerable Auxentius[23] shared with him. Amid these afflictions St. Cosmas also received a blessed end[24].

* * *

22. Chalcedon, or more correctly Kalchedon, was originally a Megarian colony on the shore of the Propontis (the Sea of Marmara) at the entrance to the Bosphorus, founded 2 or 3 centuries B.C.; afterward it became one of the principal cities of Bithynia, a region of Asia Minor. In the history of the Christian Church, Chalcedon is noted as the place of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, convened in 451 under the emperor Marcian, to condemn the Monophysite heresy, which acknowledged only one nature (the divine) in Jesus Christ. At present, on the site of ancient Chalcedon stands a small Turkish village, Kadıköy.

23. His memory is celebrated on the same day. The Auxentius mentioned here is not to be identified with the Venerable Auxentius, whose memory is celebrated on February 14. That Auxentius labored on Mount Oxeia near Chalcedon and was present at the Fourth Ecumenical Council. He reposed around the year 470.

24. The repose of St. Cosmas took place at the beginning of the 9th century (around 816), under the iconoclast emperor Leo the Armenian (Leo V), who reigned from 813 to 820.

THE NINETEENTH DAY OF APRIL

April 19

19 апреля

New Calendar April 19 · Old Calendar May 2 (civil dates)

Memory of Our Venerable Father John the Ancient-Cave-Dweller

Память преподобного отца нашего Иоанна Ветхопещерника

The name "Old Lavra" was given to the monastery of St. Chariton, which stood in the Palestinian wilderness near Jerusalem. It was called the "Old Lavra" because St. Chariton founded it before the other lavras, as is written in detail in his Life.[1] It was in this Old Lavra of Chariton that the Venerable John, whom we commemorate today, lived in ascetic labors. From his youth burning with love for the Lord, St. John cleaved to God with all his soul, in accordance with what is written in Holy Scripture: "But it is good for me to draw near to God" (Ps. 72:28). Having despised the vain life of the world, St. John withdrew from his homeland and, taking upon himself the cross of the monastic life, wandered to various places for the sake of the Lord, who, from the day of His birth until His death, "had not where to lay his head" (Mt. 8:20).

Having reached the holy places of Jerusalem, St. John venerated the life-giving Tomb of the Lord, and then came to the aforementioned Lavra of the Blessed Chariton, where, for his virtuous life, he was counted worthy of the sacred rank of priest. Subduing the passions of the flesh by great abstinence, St. John here also showed himself an imitator of the great ancient ascetics: through all-night vigils and unceas-

1. Venerable Chariton labored in the third and early fourth centuries in Palestine, where he founded three monasteries: Souka ("the Old Lavra"), Pharan, and Jericho. – His memory is celebrated on September 28.

ing remembrance of death, he attained complete mortification of his flesh and was as it were an Angel in the flesh.

Having lived a considerable number of years and at all times pleasing God, the Saint reposed in the Lord.[2] His soul, in the hands of the incorporeal holy Angels, was carried to the eternal heavenly abodes.

St. John is called "Ancient-Cave-Dweller" rather than "of the Old Lavra" because the Old Lavra of the Venerable Chariton was originally located in a robbers' cave. Into this cave the Venerable Chariton was shut up by robbers. But after the robbers, having drunk wine poisoned with the venom of a serpent, died, the Venerable Chariton was freed from them. Finding in the cave much gold that the robbers had plundered, the Venerable Chariton built a church beside the cave; and when brethren gathered to him, he established a monastery above the cave. And since the Venerable John dwelt in that ancient cave, performing the services in the cave church, he was therefore named "Ancient-Cave-Dweller."

* * *

Memory of the Holy Martyrs Christopher, Theona and Antoninus

Память святых мучеников Христофора, Феоны и Антонина

The holy martyrs Christopher, Theona and Antoninus, whom we commemorate today, were spearmen soldiers of the emperor Diocletian.[3] Once, being present at the tortures of the holy Great Martyr George and seeing the miracles performed by St. George, they cast off their weapons and their military belts[4] and, standing before the emperor, boldly confessed their faith in Christ. For this, by the emperor's command, they were bound in chains and cast into prison.

On the next day they were brought out of prison and placed before the tribunal of the impious emperor, who compelled them to renounce

2. The repose of St. John the Old Cave-Dweller took place in the second half of the eighth century.
3. Emperor Diocletian reigned from 284 to 305.

Christ. But when the holy martyrs did not obey the tormentor and openly glorified the true God, the tormentor commanded that their bodies be hung up, scraped with iron instruments, and burned with fire. But when, even after this, the holy martyrs remained unyielding, the emperor ordered them burned on a fire.

Thus these holy martyrs completed their sufferings for Christ.[5]

* * *

Memory of Our Venerable Father George the Confessor, Bishop of Antioch in Pisidia

Память преподобного отца нашего Георгия Исповедника, епископа Антиохии Писидийской

The Confessor of Christ, the Venerable George, lived in the time of iconoclasm. Having loved Christ from his youth, he received the monastic tonsure and, by his pious life and many labors and ascetic struggles, became a dwelling and vessel of the Holy Spirit. He was appointed Bishop of Antioch in Pisidia[6] and in this rank diligently guided the flock entrusted to his leadership. When, at the instigation of the devil, the iconoclastic heresy grew strong, and at the emperor's invitation all the bishops hastened to assemble at Constantinople, this hierarch too came there and boldly stood for Orthodoxy, advising the emperor to obey the conciliar ecclesiastical decrees handed down to us by the holy fathers, the teachers of Orthodoxy, and exhorting him to imitate their faith and not be led astray "by divers and strange doctrines" (Heb. 13:9), in accordance with the commandment of the holy Apostle Paul. They tried to compel him too to renounce the veneration of the holy icons, but he did not obey the impious iconoclasts, for which he was deposed from the episcopate and sent into exile, where he ended his life.[7]

4. A belt, as a sign of imperial favor, was usually worn by soldiers who held a high post or were especially close to the emperor (such as the holy martyrs commemorated today, who originally served as spear-bearers or bodyguards of Emperor Diocletian).

5. The martyrs' death took place in 303.

6. Pisidia – a region of Asia Minor.

7. The repose of St. George took place during the reign of the iconoclast Emperor Leo (V) the Armenian (813–820).

* * *

Memory of Our Venerable Father Tryphon, Patriarch of Constantinople

Память преподобного отца нашего Трифона, патриарха Константинопольского

The Byzantine emperor Romanus,[8] father-in-law of the emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus,[9] having a younger son named Theophylact, whom he had promised, as soon as he was born, to dedicate to the spiritual rank, wished to make him Patriarch of Constantinople upon the death of the then patriarch Stephen.[10] But since Theophylact was still then a young man, only sixteen years old, and according to the canons of the Church could not accept such a rank, the monk Tryphon[11] was chosen for the time being as locum tenens and administrator of the patriarchal throne; he was to govern the patriarchal throne only until the emperor's son Theophylact should reach the age that gave him the right to occupy the hierarchal throne.

Rapidly advanced through the hierarchical ranks, the monk Tryphon was consecrated bishop and assumed the patriarchal administration, being a man truly worthy of such a rank, since he led a blameless life. Governing the patriarchate for not much more than three years, he was removed from this administration in the following circumstances.

When Theophylact had reached only twenty years of age, the emperor Romanus began to press Tryphon to yield the patriarchal throne to his son. But the Blessed Tryphon did not consider it possible to yield such a high rank to a young and inexperienced youth, a rank which could be bestowed only upon a man most perfect both in years and in understanding, well versed in Holy Scripture and in general capable of rightly steering the rudder of the Church.

Then the emperor Romanus was greatly grieved, not knowing how to act, since he had no accusation against Tryphon on the basis of

8. Emperor Romanus (Lecapenus) governed Byzantium from 917 to 944.
9. Constantine (VII) Porphyrogenitus reigned from 912 to 959.
10. St. Stephen II was Patriarch of Constantinople from 925 to 928.
11. St. Tryphon governed the Patriarchate of Constantinople from 928 to 931.

which he could remove him from the patriarchal throne, especially as the Venerable Tryphon was a man of holy, blameless life. In these circumstances a friend of the emperor, the bishop of Caesarea, Theophanes, a crafty man, said to the emperor:

"Emperor, entrust this matter to me, and I will arrange it excellently according to your royal desire."

The emperor was very glad of Theophanes' proposal and begged him to bring to an end quickly the business he had undertaken.

Going to the holy Tryphon, Theophanes entered into conversation with him, hypocritically pretending to be a man devoted to him. He said the following to him:

"Master, the emperor is plotting great schemes against you: with his partisans he is seeking a pretext and an excuse to depose you from the patriarchal throne. However, despite all their efforts, they will hardly achieve anything, since they are bringing against you an accusation in which you are not guilty. Thus they say that you are, as it were, an unlettered man and do not know how to write at all; and therefore they consider you unworthy of the patriarchate. In view of this, take care in advance to put them to shame and stop their mouths, so that they fall silent. If you wish to listen to me, act thus. In the presence of the whole council, write your name and patriarchal title on clean paper, and send what you have written to the emperor, so that your slanderers, who say that you do not know how to write, may be put to shame."

The Blessed Tryphon, being guileless, did not perceive Theophanes' treachery and thought his advice good, and therefore carried it out. When the sessions of the council began, the patriarch addressed everyone with the following speech:

"The servants of the sanctuary of God are vainly seeking accusations against me, those who desire to cast me down from the throne. I trust in my God that they will find nothing against me for which I could be deprived of the throne entrusted to me by God, even if they insistently seek this. Among other things they have brought against me the false accusation that I am unlettered and do not know how to write at all. Behold, in the presence of all of you I am writing these lines, so that my slanderers may be ashamed and cease to lie about me."

Having said this, the Blessed Tryphon took clean paper and, before the eyes of all, wrote on it the following:

"Tryphon, by the mercy of God Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome, Ecumenical Patriarch."

The paper thus obtained was then handed to the emperor. The emperor, on the advice of the aforementioned Theophanes, bishop of Caesarea, ordered the following words to be added on it in another hand:

"I yield the patriarchal place not for any other cause, but solely because I consider myself unworthy of this rank."

Having added these words, the emperor ordered this paper to be read in the presence of princes, boyars and all the officials. Then, with the help of his partisans, he forcibly removed the most holy Patriarch Tryphon from the patriarchal palace and commanded that his son Theophylact be appointed to the patriarchal throne. As a result, great disturbances and disorders arose in the Church, because many of the servants of the Church continued to regard Tryphon, and not Theophylact, as patriarch.

Meanwhile the blessed Tryphon, having patiently borne such insult upon himself, withdrew to the monastery where he had dwelt before his appointment to the patriarchal throne; and, having lived here two years and five months, he reposed in the Lord.[12] His honorable body was transferred to the Great Church and laid there beside the tombs of the patriarchs.

After his death the disturbances and unrest in the Church ceased, for after the repose of St. Tryphon all agreed to the election of Theophylact to the patriarchate and joined in communion with him.[13] The memory of St. Tryphon was honored, glorifying and giving thanks to God.

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12. The repose of St. Tryphon took place in 933.
13. Patriarch Theophylact governed the Church of Constantinople from 933 to 956.

Memory of Venerable Nicephorus

Память преподобного Никифора

Our great father, the blessed Nicephorus, was a native of the city of Constantinople. His parents, Andrew and Theodora, were people of noble birth and very wealthy. They taught their son the fear of God. After their death Nicephorus, having come to know the vanity of the world, felt in himself a desire to dedicate himself to the service of God. Therefore, distributing all his inheritance to the poor, he departed from Constantinople to Chalcedon.[14] There he came to the monastery of St. Andrew and, seeing the perfect life of the ascetics, resolved to remain to dwell with them. Soon after this the abbot of the monastery sent him to the Phoenician island, where there was a monastery of the Most Holy Theotokos, so that he might be abbot there and shepherd the flock of Christ. Arriving on the island, the Venerable One by many miracles turned to faith in Christ the pagans who lived there, destroyed their shrines and built churches in their place. In his ascetic life he surpassed all. Having lived in the monastery thirty-three years, and feeling the nearness of his departure to the Lord, he informed the brethren of this and appointed in his place as abbot the pious monk Joseph, while he himself hastened to set out for Chalcedon. Boarding a ship, he fell ill and said to the sailors:

"Be courageous and calm, for I am departing to the Lord. Carry my body to Chalcedon."

With these words the saint died. With a favorable wind the ship soon arrived at Chalcedon, and the sailors laid the body of the Venerable One in a coffin and buried him with honor.

* * *

14. The city of Chalcedon lies opposite Constantinople on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus, in the Roman province of Bithynia, of which it was the chief city.

THE TWENTIETH DAY OF APRIL

April 20

20 апреля

New Calendar April 20 · Old Calendar May 3 (civil dates)

Memory of Our Venerable Father Anastasius, Abbot of Mount Sinai

Память преподобного отца нашего Анастасия, игумена Синайской горы

St. Anastasius was brought up from his very youth in great piety, as is seen from the following words which he himself spoke:

"Those who saw Christ in the flesh regarded Him as a prophet; but we, although we have not seen Him with bodily eyes, nevertheless from our earliest years, being yet infants and children, have always acknowledged Him to be God, the almighty Lord, the Creator of the ages, and have learned to confess Him as the radiance of the Father's glory. His Holy Gospel we hear with such love as though we beheld Christ Himself before us, speaking to us; and when we receive the immaculate pearl of His most pure Body, we believe that we receive Christ Himself. And when we see only His image on an icon, we bow down, prostrate ourselves, and honor Him as though we saw Him Himself looking upon us from heaven."

From these words of the Venerable Anastasius it is clearly seen that from his childhood he was taught to know Christ the true God, to believe in Him, to fear Him with unfeigned fear, to love Him with all his heart, and to honor Him with the worship that befits Him.

Having attained the age of maturity, St. Anastasius left the world and, taking up the cross according to the Gospel commandment (Mt. 16:24), followed Christ with self-denial. Withdrawing into a monastery, Anastasius became a monk there. But desiring to attain the highest possible ascetic labors of virtue, and striving to imitate men perfect in virtue, St. Anastasius went to Jerusalem and settled on

Mount Sinai, where he labored together with many holy men who had prospered in the struggles of the monastic life.

At that time the abbot of Mount Sinai was the Venerable John Climacus[1]. For his humility of mind he received from God the gift of spiritual discernment and wisdom. He composed many soul-profiting discourses, wrote the life of certain holy fathers, and was granted the rank of presbyter.

After St. John Climacus and his brother George, St. Anastasius was abbot of Mount Sinai. He labored very much in refuting heretics called Akephaloi[2], that is, "headless," wrote much against them, and by disputing with them exposed and put them to shame. The heresy of the Akephaloi arose in Alexandria[3] during the reign of the emperor Zeno[4]; its founders were persons hostile to and opposed to the Fourth Ecumenical Council of the holy fathers[5], which was held in Chalcedon[6]. At the time this heresy arose in Alexandria there was the false patriarch and heretic Peter, surnamed Mongos[7]. Later Severus, who received the surname "Headless" for belonging to the heresy of the headless ones, also joined the same heresy of the Akephaloi; this is the very Severus who, during the reign of the emperor Anastasius[8], seized the throne of the Patriarchate of Antioch[9].

St. Anastasius struck down all these heretics, and he struggled against them not only on Mount Sinai but, in addition, he himself went

1. St. John Climacus, hegumen of Mount Sinai, great ascetic of piety, author of the work "The Ladder," where are traced as it were the steps of ascent on the path of moral perfection. St. John lived in the sixth century. – See his life under March 30.
2. Akephaloi (from the Greek word *kephalē*, head), a designation applied to certain church parties, as for example to that which at the Council of Ephesus (the Third Ecumenical) would not follow either Cyril or John of Antioch, and also to that party which separated from the Patriarch of Alexandria when he signed the Henotikon – and to some others.
3. Alexandria – a city in the north of Egypt, renowned in antiquity for its learning and commerce.
4. Emperor Zeno reigned from 474 to 491.
5. The Fourth Ecumenical Council was convened by order of Emperor Marcian (450–457) at Chalcedon in 451. At this council the dogma concerning the manner of union of the two natures in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ was finally defined.
6. The city of Chalcedon is situated in Bithynia (a region of Asia Minor), by the Bosphorus strait.
7. Peter Mongus or Monges – a Monophysite, was patriarch from 477 to 490.
8. Anastasius (Dicorus) governed the empire from 491 to 518.

about Syria, Arabia, and Egypt, everywhere uprooting and expelling this heresy and establishing the Church of Christ. Having served the Lord much in this way, the Venerable Anastasius departed to the Lord in deep old age. His death occurred during the reign of the emperor Heraclius[10].

It should be noted that there were two Anastasiuses with the same surname "the Sinaite." The first, older in years and rank, was the Patriarch of Antioch, who suffered unjust exile under the emperor Justin; the other is the one just mentioned, who lived somewhat later and was abbot of Mount Sinai.

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Memory of St. Anastasius the Sinaite, Patriarch of Antioch

Память святого Анастасия Синаита, патриарха Антиохийского

In the thirty-fifth year of the reign of the emperor Justinian the Great[11], after the death of the Patriarch of Antioch Domnus the Younger[12], Anastasius, surnamed the Sinaite, ascended the patriarchal throne, because he had been taken to the episcopal cathedra from Mount Sinai.

At this time troubles began in the Church over the impious speculations of certain persons concerning the divine flesh of Christ: namely, that during the Savior's sojourn among men, before His voluntary sufferings, His flesh did not experience suffering and was not subject to natural needs, and that our Lord Jesus Christ took food and drink before His Passion and resurrection in the same way that He ate when appearing to His Apostles after the resurrection[13]. This impious speculation arose in Constantinople. It is written in detail in the Life of St. Eutychius, Patriarch of Constantinople[14]. The emperor Justinian, se-

9. Severus – heresiarch, was patriarch from 512 to 519.
10. Emperor Heraclius reigned from 610 to 641.
11. Emperor Justinian the Great reigned from 527 to 565.
12. Patriarch of Antioch Domnus II governed the patriarchal see from 546 to 560.
13. Such opinions were held by the so-called heretics Aphthartodocetae (from the Greek, "incorruptible"), a branch of the Monophysite heresy.
14. See his life under April 6.

duced by the heretics, at first joined this heretical speculation (but later he abandoned this heresy), and he wished to raise this heretical teaching to the status of a dogma of faith. As a result, great confusion arose in the Church, so that St. Eutychius, who opposed the heresy, was also deposed from the patriarchal throne.

All who wavered, through ignorance, as to whether or not to accept this teaching awaited counsel and direction from the Patriarch of Antioch, Anastasius the Sinaite, since St. Anastasius was a man very well versed in Holy Scripture, steadfast in confessing the Orthodox faith, and holy in life. The heretics exerted every effort to win St. Anastasius to their side, in the hope that if he inclined to their teaching, all the Orthodox would follow his example. To this end they appealed for help to the emperor, but they were unsuccessful, since St. Anastasius rebuked the emperor in writing for his error. He also sent his pastoral epistles to all the Syrian provinces, to the clergy and laity, instructing everyone to guard against the said heresy. Besides this, in Antioch he preached daily in the church, repeating this Apostolic admonition: "But even if we, or an Angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel other than that which we preached to you, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:8).

Learning of all this, the emperor Justinian became angry at the most holy Patriarch Anastasius and wished to cast him down from the throne, as he had Patriarch Eutychius of Constantinople, but suddenly he felt the approach of his death and abandoned his intention.

Dying, the emperor repented of the heresy and wrote in his testament that the holy Patriarch Eutychius should be returned from exile to his see. Thus Justinian died in repentance and was counted among the pious emperors; and in the Church peace was again established.

After Justinian's death the governance of the state was assumed by his nephew, Justin the Younger[15]. At the instigation of the heretics the latter deposed from the throne the Antiochene hierarch of God, Anastasius the Sinaite, bringing unjust accusations against him. Thus St. Anastasius was accused first of all of not guarding Church funds and of squandering them uselessly; then of speaking evil of the emperor, hav-

15. Justin II reigned from 565 to 578.

ing answered a question put to him about why he did not spare Church property, with the words: "So that the universal destroyer Justin may not take the last of it." There were also those who said that when Anastasius was being raised to the Antiochene throne, Justin, who managed the imperial palaces under his uncle Justinian, expected a gift of gold from Anastasius, since he was a greedy lover of money. But St. Anastasius gave him nothing, reasoning justly that it is not right to give gold for the receiving of a spiritual rank, which is not acquired for gold but bestowed by the grace of the Holy Spirit. From that time Justin became angry at Anastasius. When after his uncle's death he assumed the governance of the state, he sought accusations against the blameless hierarch Anastasius and, taking advantage of the false charges, cast him down from the throne.

After Anastasius's deposition, against his will there was appointed to the Antiochene patriarchal throne Gregory, abbot of the Lavra of Pharan[16], a man also adorned with piety, who is commemorated with praise in the Leimonarion of the most holy Patriarch of Jerusalem Sophronius. After the death of this Gregory, the blessed Anastasius the Sinaite, after twenty-three years of exile during the reign of the emperor Maurice[17], was again restored to the Antiochene patriarchal throne[18]. At that time the pope in Rome was St. Gregory the Great, surnamed the Dialogist, or Conversationalist[19]. This saint maintained the most sincere spiritual fellowship with the blessed Anastasius, corresponding with him. When St. Pope Gregory heard that Anastasius had returned to his throne, he immediately, rejoicing with him at his return, sent him an epistle in which he wrote the following:

16. The Lavra of Faran received its name from the village of Faran lying near it. The site of this monastery is indicated in the life of St. Euthymius in the following words: "Euthymius came to the lavra called Fara, situated at a distance of six miles from the holy city." – Gregory II governed the patriarchate of Antioch from 573 to 596.

17. St. Maurice governed Byzantium from 582 to 602.

18. St. Anastasius the Sinaite governed the patriarchal see the first time from 561 to 572, and the second time from 596 to 601.

19. St. Gregory the Dialogist was Pope of Rome from 590 to 604. His memory is celebrated by the Church on March 12, in the side chapel of the Apostle Peter dedicated to his name. – Among the works of St. Gregory especially noteworthy are the "Dialogues on the Life of the Italian Fathers" (for this work he received the designation "Dialogist") and the "Pastoral Rule," in which the duties of a pastor are set forth.

"Glory to God in the heavens, and on earth let there be peace and joy, since the broad river, which once left the Antiochene stony ground dry, has now again returned to its channel and waters the valleys it washes."

In another letter he again says:

"You tell me, holy father, that if it were possible you would wish to converse with me without paper and pen, and you lament that the great distance between East and West hinders this. But I speak the truth: even on paper your thought converses with me, as it were without paper. From the words of your discourse I see your love for me, and we, united by the grace of almighty God in the bond of love, are not divided by distance. Why do you desire to have gilded dove's wings, when you already possess them? For these wings are love of God and of neighbor. On these wings the holy Church soars aloft; by them she surpasses all that is earthly. If you, holy father, did not have these wings, you would not have flown to me in a letter with such love. Therefore I beseech you, pray for me, who am weak, that through your prayers the Lord may speedily deliver me from such great calamities and troubles (inflicted upon Rome by the Lombards[20]) and bring me to the haven of eternal rest. I have received with gratitude your good wishes, which you, a man of God, being humble in spirit, expressed to me, and concerning which you say: 'What can a beggar give except what belongs to a beggar?' But if you had not made yourself a beggar in spirit, your blessings would not have been so bountiful. May almighty God protect you under His shelter from all evil. And since your life is of great importance to all good people, may the Most High, after many years only, transfer you to the eternal mansions of the heavenly fatherland."

From this epistle of St. Gregory, Pope of Rome, to the blessed Anastasius, Patriarch of Antioch, the mutual love of both of them in the

Holy Spirit becomes evident; and at the same time this epistle bears witness to the piety and holiness of Anastasius' life.

The blessed Anastasius, having lived six years after his return to the throne, reposed in the Lord in the fourteenth year of the reign of the Emperor Maurice.

After this St. Anastasius the Sinaite, another Anastasius ascended the patriarchal throne, but no longer with the appellation "Sinaite."[21] The latter was slain by the Jews in the reign of the emperor and persecutor of Christians, Phocas,[22] and was honored by the faithful as a martyr of Christ.

It should be noted that there were two Anastasiuses with the designation "Sinaite." The first was the Patriarch of Antioch, who reposed in the reign of the Emperor Maurice; the other, whose feast is celebrated today, was abbot of Mount Sinai and died in the reign of the Emperor Heraclius,[23] who was the successor of the persecutor Phocas, who had slain Maurice. In those times there were also other venerable fathers bearing the name Anastasius, who were renowned for virtuous life, but were not Sinaites like this Anastasius, who, having ascended the patriarchal throne at Antioch after Anastasius the Sinaite, was slain by the Jews. Moreover, in the Leimonarion, in chapters 48 and 49, mention is made of Abba Anastasius, who was keeper of the keys of the life-giving Tomb and of the Church of the Resurrection of Christ our God at Jerusalem.

* * *

20. The Lombards – a Germanic tribe; in earliest times they dwelt between the lower Elbe and the Aller; from the fourth century they gradually began to migrate southeast toward the Danube, and in the sixth century they took possession of Pannonia. From there in 568 they went into Italy and subdued all of it in a war against the Eastern Romans, with the exception of Liguria, the Exarchate, Pentapolis, the Roman Duchy, the region of Naples, and both southern peninsulas. From the conquered regions of central Italy the Lombard kingdom was formed, which was subdued in 774 by Charlemagne, who assumed the title of King of the Lombards. Later German kings and emperors, as sovereigns of Italy, bore the title of Lombard kings.

21. Anastasius II governed the Patriarchate of Antioch from 602 to 610.

22. The Emperor Phocas reigned from 602 to 610.

23. The Emperor Heraclius reigned from 610 to 641.

Memory of St. Gregory, Patriarch of Antioch

Память святого Григория, патриарха Антиохийского

The Venerable Gregory was hegumen of the monastery called Faran, which was situated between Mount Sinai and Raithu. By a special providence of God he was miraculously foreshown by God as a man worthy of the patriarchal throne. This is related as follows in the Leimonarion of the most holy Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Abba George the Armenian, disciple of Abba Sergius, related to us the following: "Since Abba Gregory, who had been hegumen of the Lavra of Faran, repeatedly asked me to bring him to Abba Sergius, I set out with him to the elder, who was at that time dwelling in the desert near the Dead Sea.[24] The elder, seeing him, greeted him and received him very kindly. He brought water, washed his feet, and conversed with him the entire day about the salvation of the soul, and on the next day dismissed him. When Abba Gregory had departed from Abba Sergius, I asked the elder:

'Do you know, father, that I was scandalized? For I brought many bishops, presbyters, and other fathers to you, and you washed the feet of none of them, only that of Abba Gregory?'

To these words the elder answered me:

'I do not know who Gregory is, but I know that I received a patriarch into my cave, for I saw that he wears the omophorion[25] and holds the Gospel in his hands.'

24. The Dead Sea, salt and bituminous, in the south of Palestine, formed in the valley of Siddim after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Its length is 70 versts, its breadth 25. It is deeper in the north and shallower in the south. Its surface lies 1200 feet below the Mediterranean Sea. The abundance of bitterly salt particles in the water of this sea means that there is no life either in the sea itself or in its surroundings: there are no fish, no birds, no plants. Attempts to penetrate to the middle of the lake have been fruitless, and for many have been fatal. The water of the Dead Sea is of an exceptional density; it is difficult to submerge in it; the waves strike the rocky shores like fragments of stone.

25. Omophorion (Greek, “shoulder” and “burden”) is a shoulder vestment, an element of the episcopal vestments. The omophorion is a long and wide band with images of the cross, worn over the other episcopal vestments, with one end hanging down in front and the other behind. Symbolically, the omophorion signifies the lost sheep which the Good Shepherd laid upon His shoulders (Lk. 15:4–7).

Abba Sergius spoke of Abba Gregory in a prophetic spirit, for after five years, by the providence of God, Abba Gregory was ordained patriarch in the city of Antioch."[26]

Concerning Abba Gregory, Patriarch of Antioch, some of the elders related that he possessed especially the following virtues: almsgiving, non-remembrance of wrong, repentance, humility. He also had great compassion for sinners, and acquired many other virtues. The most holy Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, gives him this testimony:

"Such a man as the Patriarch of Antioch, the blessed Gregory, is worthy of being numbered among the saints and venerable ones: he was taken against his will to the patriarchate and led a holy life in Christ our Lord, to Whom be glory forever. Amen."

* * *

Memory of our Venerable Father Theodore the Trichinas

Память преподобного отца нашего Феодора Трихины

The Venerable Theodore the Trichinas, that is, the hair-shirt wearer,[27] was the son of wealthy parents and came from the city of Constantinople. Having left parents, wealth, and glory for God's sake, he withdrew from his homeland and received monasticism in a certain desert monastery.

Here he led so strict a life that he greatly wasted his flesh, so that his face became like that of a corpse. Throughout whole nights he stood in prayer, and despite the cold and frost he never covered his head and wore only a single prickly garment of hair, for which he was called, as said, the hair-shirt wearer, or Trichina. Afterwards that monastery in which the saint led his austere life was also called by his name. For his ascetic labors St. Theodore received from God power over demons, and, having worked many miracles, departed in peace to the Lord.[28] He wrought miracles not only during his lifetime but also after his repose,

26. St. Gregory I governed the see of Antioch from 573 to 596.

27. From the Greek *thrix*, "hair."

28. The time of St. Theodore's life is not known precisely. It is certain only that he lived between the fourth and ninth centuries.

for from his holy relics there flowed fragrant healing myrrh, by which, to the glory of Christ our God, many diseases were cured and unclean spirits were cast out.

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THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF APRIL

April 21

21 апреля

New Calendar April 21 · Old Calendar May 4 (civil dates)

Sufferings of the Holy Hieromartyr Januarius

Страдания святого священномученика Иануария

While the impious emperors Diocletian and Maximian[1] were fiercely persecuting the Christians, Januarius, Bishop, was seized and brought before the governor of Campania[2], Timotheus, for interrogation. When the commander saw that Januarius, being compelled in various ways to worship idols, now enticed by flatteries and now frightened by threats, remained unshaken in the Christian faith, he ordered that he be cast into a heated furnace for burning. But the saint, like the three youths in the Babylonian furnace (see Dan. 3), remained unharmed by the fire, for an Angel of God came down to him and quenched the power of the fire, and the saint rejoiced amid the flames, singing and glorifying God.

When he came out of the furnace, all observed that the fire had not touched even his garments, and they greatly marveled at this. The commander, however, supposing that the Christian bishop had come out unharmed from the fire because he was guarded by some magical power, was filled with the greatest wrath against the saint. He ordered that he be stretched upon the instrument of torture so tightly that the limbs of his body were pulled apart from their joints. He then ordered the saint to be beaten without mercy until his whole body was torn to

1. Diocletian governed the Roman Empire from 284 A.D. to 305 A.D., and Maximian Galerius from 305 A.D. to 311 A.D.

2. Campania is the southernmost of the regions of central Italy, situated along the shore of the Tyrrhenian Sea from Mount Massicus to the river Silarus.

pieces, his bare bones were visible, and the ground around him was stained with blood.

To this dreadful spectacle came two clerics, the deacon Festus and the reader Desiderius, who, standing in the crowd of people, looked with reverence upon the sufferings of their bishop. And since they rejoiced in their souls at the patience the martyr displayed, and wept at the cruel sufferings inflicted upon him, the pagans, from these signs, guessed that they were Christians. Then the impious seized both of them, bound them, and together with the holy martyr-bishop Januarius led them after the commander to the city of Puteoli[3], where they were cast into prison.

In this same prison were confined, for confessing Christ, Proculus and Sossius, deacons of the city of Puteoli, and two laymen, Eutychius and Acutio, condemned to be torn apart by wild beasts.

At the coming of day, they were all led out together with the bishop into the square and given to the beasts. But God, who is glorified among His saints, closed the mouths of the beasts, just as He once closed the mouths of the lions in the pit into which Daniel was cast (Dan. 6). Not one of those beasts touched the holy martyrs; rather, all of them, for a time changing their natural ferocity into lamb-like meekness, approached the holy bishop Januarius and fell at his feet. This extraordinary event filled all the people present with amazement and terror. Meanwhile the commander, attributing this too to the supposed magical power of the Christians, pondered by what means he might put to death the bishop of God and all who were with him.

While he, blinded in his spiritual eyes, was pondering this, he suddenly lost his bodily sight as well and, feeling his way along the walls, stood in need of a guide. When the hierarch and martyr of Christ Januarius, in his meekness, prayed for his persecutor, the commander Timotheus, the latter immediately regained his bodily sight, but not his spiritual sight. The people who beheld all these wonders, to the number of about five thousand, believed in Christ. But the commander, who had regained his sight through the martyr's prayers after his sudden blind-

3. Puteoli is a seaport city in Campania, not far from Naples.

ness, ungrateful and hardened of heart, not only failed to acknowledge the truth but fell into even greater madness, and instead of giving thanks to Christ our Lord, uttered blasphemies against Him. Inflamed with malice at the conversion to Christ of so many people, he ordered that the holy martyrs be beheaded with the sword. Thus the hieromartyr and hierarch of God Januarius, together with his fellow sufferers, the deacons Festus, Proculus and Sossius, the reader Desiderius, and the laymen Eutychius and Acutio, received the crown of martyrdom, being slain by the sword outside the walls of the city of Puteoli[4].

The bodies of these holy martyrs were taken by the inhabitants of the neighboring cities, each city taking one martyr, desiring each to have its own intercessor before God. The body of the hieromartyr Januarius was taken by the inhabitants of the city of Naples; bearing it with honor into their city, they laid it in their church. At the time the body of the saint was being taken from the city of Puteoli, they gathered up the blood of the saint which had dried on the ground there, placed it in a glass vessel, and reverently kept it at home. When the vessel with this blood was placed upon the martyr's head, the blood immediately liquefied and became warm, as though it had only just been shed. In Naples, too, various miracles were wrought through the prayers of the hieromartyr Januarius. Particularly glorified there was the following miracle.

Once Mount Vesuvius[5] poured forth so great a quantity of fiery lava that fear and trembling seized the inhabitants not only of the nearby but also of distant cities. But when the people, coming to the tomb of the saint, began with tears to call upon him for help, the fiery lava immediately withdrew into that mountain, and no harm came to the people. Another glorious miracle was also accomplished over a dead youth.

A widow woman named Maximilla had an only son, and when he died she wept inconsolably for him. Coming into the church, she noticed

4. The repose of the holy martyrs took place about 305 A.D.

5. Vesuvius is a volcano in Italy near the city of Naples. In 79 A.D. there was the first eruption of Vesuvius, which buried the cities of Herculaneum, Pompeii and Stabiae. From that time eruptions of Vesuvius periodically recurred, sometimes several times in a decade. In 1906, among other things, there was a fairly strong eruption that destroyed several cities.

above the church doors an icon bearing the image of the holy bishop Januarius. Recalling the miracle of old in the Old Testament, namely how the holy prophet Elisha raised the son of the Shunammite woman (see 4 Kgdms. 4), she placed firm hope in God and in the saint of God, and acted after the example of Elisha: taking the icon of the holy martyr Januarius, she laid it upon her dead youth, placing eyes to eyes, lips to lips, and the rest of the likeness of the depicted body to the body of the corpse, and prayed with lamentation and hot tears, saying:

"O servant of God! Have mercy upon me and assuage my sorrow: raise up my only son."

As she prayed thus, her son immediately revived and rose up in health. All who had gathered for his funeral, beholding so glorious a miracle, marveled, glorified and thanked God, who works wondrous deeds through His saints, and they extolled with praises the holy martyr Januarius as their swift helper, through whose holy prayers may the Lord grant us also His mercies forever. Amen.

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Suffering of the Holy Martyr Theodore

Страдание святого мученика Феодора

In the reign of the emperor Antoninus[6], when the commander Theodotus governed Pergē of Pamphylia[7], handsome and sturdy young men were being levied here for military service. Among the other youths of good family was taken the most beautiful in appearance, the blessed Theodore, whose memory we keep today, and he was brought before the commander Theodotus. The commander placed upon him, as upon the other youths, the military sign. But the holy Theodore immediately cast it off, saying:

"I have been sealed from my mother's womb by my Heavenly King, the Lord Jesus Christ, and I do not wish to be a soldier for another king."

6. Antoninus Pius was emperor from 138 A.D. to 161 A.D.

7. Pamphylia is a narrow coastal country in the south of Asia Minor, which became a Roman province in 78 B.C.

Then the commander asked the saint:

"What king's soldier are you?"

"I am a soldier of Him who created heaven and earth!"

The commander, perceiving that Theodore was a Christian, asked him:

"Will you not offer sacrifices to our gods?"

"I have never offered, and will never offer, sacrifices to unclean demons," answered the saint.

Then the commander ordered that he be cruelly beaten, after which he summoned him again for interrogation and asked:

"Have you now come to your senses, will you obey me and bow down to the gods?"

"If you," answered the saint, "had come to know the God who created you, you yourself would desire to worship Him."

After this the commander ordered that a fire be kindled, that a huge iron pan be brought, that a large quantity of pitch, sulphur and wax be melted, that the martyr be laid naked upon the pan and be doused with boiling pitch. While all this was being prepared, God suddenly wrought a marvelous miracle: a deafening noise was heard and an earthquake occurred in that very place where the fire and the pan were; then the earth there split open and a plentiful stream of water gushed forth from the crevice in the ground, which quenched both the fire and the pan. The holy martyr, however, remained wholly unharmed, and said to the commander:

"Behold, you see that this deed was not accomplished by me, but by Christ, my God, whom I serve. If you desire to know the power of your gods, then prepare another fire, heat the pan again, and order that one of your soldiers be laid upon it in the name of your gods; then you will see the powerlessness of your gods and come to know the almighty power of my God."

Hearing this, the soldiers present said to the governor:

"No, lord, do not do this to us, but treat in this way the servants (priests) of our gods. The pan will obey the priest just as it obeys Theodore, and will not scorch him, just as it did not scorch the first one."

Having ordered the priest to be summoned at once, the commander asked him:

"What is your name?"

"My name is Dioscorus," answered the priest.

Then the commander asked the priest:

"With what magical herbs do the Christians anoint themselves, when they go fearlessly into the fire and remain unscorched there, as, for example, happened today with Theodore?"

"Christians are not sorcerers," answered Dioscorus to this, "but the name of Christ is so powerful that wherever it is called upon in faith, every magical spell is destroyed and the demons tremble."

"Is it really," asked the commander, "that Christ is stronger than our Zeus?"[8]

"Zeus and all the other gods are senseless and deaf idols," Dioscorus replied. "I beg you not to force me to lie down on the griddle. But if you wish to learn the power of Zeus, then put Zeus himself on the fire."

"But who could do that?" the commander went on. "Who would dare to lay a god on a pyre?"

"Order me," Dioscorus answered, "and I will do it. If Zeus offers me resistance, then I will believe that he is a god and can free himself from the fire."

"You are indeed no longer a priest, having spoken such words about the gods," the commander remarked.

"I," Dioscorus answered, "was once, like you, a priest in impious belief. But now, seeing the blessed Theodore invincible under the torments you have laid upon him, seeing him unscorched by the fire, I have come to know the power of Christ and have understood the impotence of the false gods. I have been established in the Christian faith, and now I desire to imitate Theodore."

"If you speak so, Dioscorus," said the commander, "then mount the griddle as Theodore did."

Then Dioscorus, falling down before the martyr of Christ, said to him:

8. Zeus is the chief god of the ancient Greek religion, considered the ruler of heaven and earth.

"Theodore, servant of Christ, the true God, pray for me."

And the saint prayed for Dioscorus. When Dioscorus had been stripped and laid upon the red-hot griddle, he cried out with a loud voice:

"I thank Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, that Thou dost number me among Thy servants. Now receive my soul in peace."

At these words he gave up his spirit, having received the crown of martyrdom in so short a time, just as the thief on the cross received Paradise.

After the repose of the blessed Dioscorus, St. Theodore was cast into prison. Then he was brought out again for another torment: his feet were bound and he was tied to wild horses, which dragged the martyr through the city streets while being driven hard. At one place by the city wall the galloping horses fell and were broken, while the martyr was saved by the invisible power of God, and, being untied, remained whole and unharmed, to the general astonishment. Two of the soldiers who had tied the saint to the horses, Socrates and Dionysius, then told everyone of the following wonderful vision of theirs: while the horses were being driven, they saw a fiery chariot descending from heaven to the martyr, which took him up and set him, unharmed, in the place of judgment. Telling everyone of this, the soldiers cried out:

"Great is the God of the Christians!"

Hearing these words, the commander ordered that these soldiers also be cast into prison together with St. Theodore, and he prepared for their torment a furnace, heating it with a strong fire for three days. Then he thrust into this furnace the martyr and the two soldiers who had believed in Christ, Socrates and Dionysius. And immediately a divine dew came down from above, which bathed the martyrs and cooled the flame. The saints remained in the midst of the furnace as if in some cool place, and conversed with one another. At this time St. Theodore recalled his blessed mother, who had been taken captive by foreigners three years earlier and carried off with other captives to Ethiopia [9], and he prayed to God for her, saying:

9. Ethiopia or Nubia is a region in Africa, lying to the south of Egypt.

"Lord Jesus Christ, God, who workest wonders! Show me, by whatever ways Thou knowest, through Thy divine power, my mother, for I desire to see her. With Thee all things are possible. Show her to me, that others too may know Thy greatness."

As the saint prayed these words, the flame gradually went out, and moreover, through the prayers of the martyr, rain came down and completely cooled the red-hot furnace. The saints began to prepare for sleep within it, for it was already night. Then an Angel appeared to St. Theodore in a dream and said to him:

"Do not grieve, Theodore, for your mother: you will see her." Awaking from sleep, the saint related the dream to his companions; and while he was still telling of it, his mother, named Philippia, came forth in the midst of the furnace, and seeing her dear son she rejoiced, and kissed him and the soldiers with him with love, and told them whence and how she had come here, guided by an invisible hand. At this time the holy martyr Theodore, raising his hands to heaven, offered fitting thanksgiving to God.

In the morning the commander, waking from sleep, said to his attendants:

"I think that not a single bone is left of Theodore and the soldiers cast with him into the furnace."

While he was saying this, one of the guards watching the furnace came to the commander with the report that the martyrs cast into the furnace were alive, and that all the fire had gone out already in the evening, extinguished by the rain poured down from above; then he said that Theodore's mother, who had suddenly appeared out of captivity, was sitting in the furnace as in a chamber, conversing about the Christian God with her son and with the soldiers. Hearing this, the commander was seized with fear and dread, went himself to the furnace, and, calling the blessed Philippia, asked her:

"Are you the mother of Theodore?"

"Yes, I am," she answered.

Then the commander said:

"Exhort your son to bow down to the gods, so that he may not perish and leave you childless."

"My son," she answered, "as I received word of him from my Lord before his conception, will be crucified by you and will offer to God the sacrifice of praise."

"Since you yourself have appointed your son a death by crucifixion," said the commander, "then let it be so."

Then the commander ordered that St. Theodore be crucified at once, and that St. Philippia have her head cut off with a sword; and the two soldiers, Socrates and Dionysius, be beheaded with swords.

Thus the holy martyrs received their crowns. St. Theodore hung alive on the cross for three days, and then likewise departed to the Lord [10]. Then some of the pious, taking the bodies of the saints, wrapped them in precious linens, anointed them with fragrant oils, and laid them with honor in a special place prepared for this, glorifying the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the One God in Trinity, glorified forever. Amen.

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Commemoration of the Holy Martyrs Isaacius, Apollos and Quadratus

Память святых мучеников Исакия, Аполлоса и Кодрата

Originally these saints were servants of the emperor Diocletian [11]. Seeing the wonders of the holy Great Martyr George, they, following the example of the Empress Alexandra, who left earthly glory and turned to Christ, turned themselves also to the Lord. The holy martyrs boldly rebuked the emperor for his impiety and hardness of heart, pointing out that he had not spared even his own wife, who had borne him a child. By the command of the impious emperor these holy martyrs were first cast into prison, where they languished from hunger and thirst, and afterwards they were beheaded with the sword for confessing Christ [12].

On the same day, the commemoration of our holy father Maximian, Patriarch of Constantinople, who governed the Church during the reign

10. The repose of the holy martyrs took place in the middle of the 2nd century.

of Theodosius the Younger for two and a half years, and who reposed peacefully in 431, April 12.

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ALSO COMMEMORATED THIS DAY

On the same day, the commemoration of our holy father Maximian, Patriarch of Constantinople, who governed the Church during the reign of Theodosius the Younger for two and a half years, and who reposed peacefully in 481, April 12.



11. The Roman emperor Diocletian, a cruel persecutor of Christianity, reigned from 284 A.D. to 305 A.D.
12. The repose of the holy martyrs took place in 303 A.D.

THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF APRIL

April 22

22 апреля

New Calendar April 22 · Old Calendar May 5 (civil dates)

Life of Our Venerable Father Theodore of Sykeon, Bishop of Anastasiopolis

Житие преподобного отца нашего Феодора Сикеота, епископа Анастасиопольского

In the land of Galatia[1] there is a village called Sykeon, twelve stades[2] from Anastasiopolis, the principal city of the province of Ancyra (in Asia Minor). In this village was born Venerable Theodore of Sykeon, to his mother Mary and to her husband, a man of some renown named Cosmas, who at that time served the Emperor Justinian the Great[3] as a courier[4]. When Theodore was conceived, a wondrous sign appeared to his mother Mary in her sleep that night: she saw a large and bright star descending into her womb. Awaking, she told of it to her mother Elpidia and her sister Dispenia, who lived with her; then she went to a discerning elder who lived in the silence of a hermit's life, six stades from that village, and related to him her strange vision. That elder, having given her spiritual counsel on a life pleasing to God, said:

"The child conceived in you will truly be a great man, great not only among men but also before God. The bright star signifies royal glory, as wise interpreters of dreams explain; yet for you what you have seen should not be taken to mean royal power on earth, but the star you saw foretells that glory of virtue and that grace of God with which God will endow your child. For the Lord is accustomed to sanctify His servants in their mother's womb before they are born."

1. Galatia – a region of Asia Minor.
2. Stadia – a measure of length equal to approximately 88 of our sazhens.
3. Justinian the Great, Roman emperor, reigned from 527 to 565 A.D.
4. Skorokhody – bodyguards of the emperor, who usually accompanied him during his journeys.

Thus the discerning elder prophesied to Mary, and after giving her some counsel he dismissed her in peace. All this became known to Theodosius, Bishop of Anastasiopolis, who likewise understood the vision to mean that the child to be born would serve as a light to the world.

Mary, returning from the elder, followed his counsel and led a God-pleasing life in chastity, together with her mother and sister. When the time of birth came, Mary bore a son, and according to Christian custom he was baptized and named Theodore (which in Greek means "Gift of God"), his very name signifying that the child would be a great gift from God to the world.

When he was six years old, his mother wished to enroll him in military service in advance, and for this purpose she prepared for him costly garments, a golden belt, and other things needed for that service, and intended to set out for Constantinople to present him to the Emperor for service there. But in a dream there appeared to her the holy Great Martyr George, saying:

"Why have you conceived such an intention concerning your child? O woman, do not labor in vain: the King of heaven claims your son for Himself."

Awaking, Mary began to weep and to say that death was near for her son, thinking that he would die soon; but the boy grew in years and in understanding. At eight years of age his mother gave him to be taught, and by the grace of God he learned better than the other children and was loved by all for his good character. Even in childish games Theodore's strong mind showed itself: he refrained from oaths and blasphemy, and warned the other children against these, calming their disputes and quarrels.

In the house of these women there lived an elder named Stephen, God-fearing and pious, whom they loved and honored as a father for his virtuous life. The youth Theodore, seeing that he fasted through the holy Great Lent until evening and took only a small piece of bread with water, was inflamed with love for God and began to imitate his fast, likewise abstaining until evening. When at dinner time he walked home from school, his mother made him eat with them, but he refused, and so

that they would not compel him, he ceased to come home at the usual hour and tried to come only in the evening. And at once he went from the house with Stephen to the church for the customary chanting; with him he received the Most Pure Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ our God, returned home late, and sustained himself only with a piece of bread and water. His mother and all the household tried to persuade him to eat cooked food and every other kind of food, but he would not agree. She asked the teacher to let the boy go home from school at dinner time, so that by this means at least she might make him eat something, for from his constant fasting he had become very thin in body. But Theodore, when released from school, did not go home; he climbed a hill not far from that place, on whose summit a church had been built in honor of the Great Martyr George, where the holy Great Martyr, appearing to him visibly in the form of a beautiful youth, led him inside the church. There the young Theodore devoted much time to reading books and spent all his dinner hour there; leaving the church as if from home, he again went to school. In the evening, when his mother asked why he had not come to dinner, he answered that he had not learned his verse and so had been kept back. And again his mother went to the teacher with a request to let him go home, and the teacher assured her with an oath that at her first request he would release Theodore at dinner time together with the other pupils. Once she saw that he had not gone home but was climbing the hill to the church; she sent a servant to bring him back by force, and with many threats persuaded him to come to dinner, but he, not heeding her, kept his usual abstinence.

When he was ten years old, a terrible sickness struck that village, so that many died of it; the blessed youth Theodore also caught this disease. All his relatives were in despair, since he was already at the point of death; then, half-alive, he was carried to the nearest church of St. John the Baptist and laid before the sanctuary. Above, in the church, beneath the cross, there was an image of the face of the Savior, from Whom two drops of dew fell upon the sick youth and healed him; he rose and went home well, glorifying God. At night, when he and all

his household were asleep, the holy Great Martyr George came to him and woke him, saying:

"Arise, Theodore, the dawn has shone and the time of morning prayer has come; let us go to the church of St. George."

Theodore quickly and joyfully arose at once. At first St. George appeared to him in the form of Stephen, who lived in their house; then he showed himself to him in his own form, waking him every night and leading him to his church. On the way the demons sought to terrify the youth, appearing to him in the shape of wolves and various beasts and rushing straight at him; but the holy martyr, going ahead of Theodore and holding a spear in his hands, drove off those dreadful apparitions and bade him not to fear. This was repeated every night, and his mother and the other women with her, rising from sleep and not finding Theodore on his bed, were perplexed; they learned that he was going to the church at night, and they wondered that no one heard when he got up, though he had lain down in the evening among them. His mother feared for him, lest the beasts tear him to pieces, since at that time a rumor had spread that a wolf was carrying off not only livestock but also small children; therefore she forbade him under threats to leave the house for the church before sunrise, because that place was deserted. Despite the threats, the blessed youth in no way obeyed his mother, and at the usual nighttime hour, moved to prayer by St. George, he went to the church unnoticed by anyone. Once, at daybreak, awaking, the mother of Theodore and the other women did not find the youth on his bed, and, greatly angered, they hastened to the church; there his mother, seizing him by the hair, dragged him from there, pulling him home with blows, and did not let him go anywhere, but at night bound him firmly to his bed so that by no means could Theodore get away. On that night the holy Great Martyr George appeared in a dream to his mother and the other women, bearing a sword girded at his side, and threatening with it, he spoke sternly:

"I will cut off your heads if you still beat the youth and forbid him to come to me."

Awaking from sleep in fear and terror, the women told one another of the terrible appearance of the martyr and his threats, marveling es-

pecially that all had seen the same vision; they at once untied the holy youth, caressed him, and humbly asked him not to be angry with them for beating him. They asked him how, going out of the house before daylight, he was not afraid of beasts. He answered them that every night a shining youth woke him and led him to the church, defending him on the way from the terrible apparitions. Then the women understood that the holy Great Martyr George, whom they had seen in the vision, appeared to him and protected him. From then on they no longer hindered Theodore in anything, and committed him to the providence of God, saying:

"May the will of the Lord be done."

This holy youth had a little sister named Vlatta, born to the second husband of Theodore's mother, whom she had married again in her younger years at the urging of relatives. This girl loved her brother Theodore very much and often during the day followed him to the church, praying with him and striving to imitate his life. The Spirit of God worked in her as in Theodore. Not far from their house was the church of the holy martyr Emilian, who in the land of Galatia, in the city of Ancyra, in the reign of the lawless Julian the Apostate[5], after long tortures was crucified on a cross[6]. The blessed Theodore entered the church of this martyr and spent the night there in prayer. Toward midnight he dozed off, and he had such a vision: it seemed to Theodore that he stood before an emperor seated on a throne in great glory, surrounded by a multitude of soldiers, and beside the emperor was a most radiant woman clothed in purple; and he heard the voice of the emperor saying to him:

"Labor, Theodore, that you may receive in the Kingdom of Heaven the perfect reward; and I will make you worthy of honor on earth too, and glorify you before men."

This vision came to him when he was twelve years old. From that time he was kindled with a great desire and love for God, and began to labor more strenuously. Shutting himself up in one of the rooms of his

5. Julian the Apostate reigned from 361 to 363 A.D.

6. The death of St. Martyr Emilian took place in 362. His memory is celebrated by the Holy Church on July 18.

house, he remained in it from the feast of the Theophany until Palm Week, practicing fasting, prayer and the reading of books, and conversing with God alone. In the first and middle weeks of the Great Fast he spoke with no one and remained in deep silence, directing the whole of his mind toward the thought of God. Thus the holy days of the Great Fast came to an end, and the feast of the Resurrection of Christ arrived. The hater, the devil, no longer able to endure the sight of so virtuous a youth, devised how to destroy him, and contrived this stratagem: one day, transforming himself into the youth Gerontius, who had studied together with Theodore in the school, he came to him and, calling him to go with him as if for a walk, led him to a high hill called "Tzidrama." Standing upon a large stone, he began to tempt him in the same way as Christ was tempted by the devil in the wilderness (Mt. 4:1–11), saying:

"If you wish, good Theodore, to show your courage, then throw yourself down from here."

Theodore answered:

"I am afraid, for it is very high."

The devil said to him:

"You were the most courageous of us all in the school, and now you fear even this? Look, I am not afraid, but I will leap down at once."

Theodore answered him:

"Do not do this, lest, having fallen, you be dashed to pieces."

The devil went on persuading him that no harm could come of it. Then Theodore said to him:

"If you do this first, and I see you unharmed, then I will throw myself down likewise."

The devil threw himself from the height into the terrible depth, and, standing there, called Theodore to himself. Theodore was amazed to see him unharmed, and thought: how could Gerontius, who never before had such courage, suddenly throw himself down from so high a hill without harm? As soon as this thought came into his head—while the devil below was shouting and calling Theodore to himself—the holy Great Martyr George immediately appeared, took Theodore by the hand, and said:

"Depart from here and follow me! Do not listen to the tempter who seeks your soul; this is not Gerontius, but the enemy of our race."

And he led him into his church, where Theodore remained for a long time, so that his mother and grandmother came to him, begging the blessed one to come home, since many relatives and neighbors, gathered for a feast at their house, were waiting for him. Knowing the Scripture, that "friendship with the world is enmity with God... and whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God" (Jas. 4:4), he did not heed them, but took off his golden belt[7], his precious outer garment and his neck-ring[8], saying:

"I know that you are afraid I will not keep them safe. Take all of this, and leave me alone."

And he did not go to the feast.

Theodore heard of a virtuous elder named Glycerius, who lived ten *poprishcha* away, in a desert place, and set out to him, desiring to learn from him and to receive a blessing. Glycerius was a man of foresight; he recognized in the youth the presence of the Spirit of God, and, receiving him gladly, asked with a smile:

"Child, do you love the monastic life?"

The youth answered:

"I love it very much, Father, and I earnestly desire to be found worthy of it."

At that time there was in that country a drought and a great lack of rain.

The two of them went out of the cell and walked, and stood before the church of St. John the Baptist; and the venerable Glycerius said, turning to the blessed youth Theodore:

"Child, let us bend our knees and pray to the Lord that He may have mercy and send rain to water the parched earth; and thus we shall know whether we are numbered among the righteous."

The elder did this not because he wished to tempt the Lord, but because he hoped that the prayers of Theodore were especially acceptable

before God. Bending their knees, they began to pray, and at once the sky was covered with clouds; and when they had finished their prayer, a very great rain fell and amply watered the dry earth. The elder was filled with joy at the grace of God, and said kindly to Theodore:

"From now on, child, whatever you ask of God, He will give you, for He will be with you, strengthening you, so that you may grow from strength to strength, both in bodily stature and in the spiritual life of God. And you shall fulfil your desire when the time for it comes."

Theodore, having received the elder's blessing, returned to his house.

At the age of fourteen he resolved to leave his home definitively, in order to live on the mountain by the church of St. George, and he begged his mother and all the household not to hinder his intention nor to come and disturb him. They did not dare to forbid him, knowing that God was with him. Theodore went, dug himself a cave in the mountain beneath the sanctuary, and remained there, constantly going to the church for prayer. His mother sent him pure bread and various boiled and roasted birds, but he laid all this on the stones along the road to the church, so that it would be eaten either by birds or by beasts, or taken by people passing by; he himself fed only on the prosphora brought to the church, eating only one of them each evening.

Eight *poprishcha* from the cave there was a place inhabited by demons, called "Areia"[9], of which it was told that the impious goddess Diana[10] lived there with a multitude of demons, so that no one could pass that place without harm, especially at noon, in July and August, and many people were tormented to death by those demons. The

7. A belt embroidered with gold was usually worn by the soldiers who served about the emperor (the bodyguards), as well as by the chief commanders of the army. As the Life relates, the parents of St. Theodore had prepared such a belt for him from his early youth, since they intended him for military service at the imperial court.

8. Grivna – a gold chain worn as an ornament around the neck.

9. This name was used by the ancient Romans for a dry, firmly trampled (and sometimes paved) open space, usually intended for drying and threshing grain (Lat. *area*, from *arare* – to be dry). Public games were sometimes held here as well.

10. Diana (Gr. Artemis) – the Greco-Roman goddess of light and life. She was venerated as the dispenser of fresh, flourishing life in nature. Diana was also considered a goddess of childbirth and a patroness of animals.

blessed Theodore heard of this, and in those months he went to that place every day and spent the whole day there, returning in the evening, suffering no misfortune from the demons, for when they saw him they fled, driven off by the power of God. In January, on the feast of the Theophany, he went with other people and clergy to the blessing of the waters; he entered the water barefoot and stood there motionless until the end of all the singing. After the feast he shut himself up in his cave and remained without leaving it, in silence, until Palm Week. His grandmother Elpidia, who loved him more than both her daughters, took comfort in such a life of his and brought him vegetables and spring bread for food, which he partook of each week on Saturdays and Sundays. Everyone marveled at such grace of God in so young a youth, and, glorifying God, they said:

"Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and hast revealed them unto this babe" (Mt. 11:25).

Also the bishop of Anastasiopolis, Theodosius, hearing all this about Theodore, rejoiced, and praising him to all, said:

"This youth is taught such a life by God."

Once Theodore fell ill from the cold, and when he dozed, the holy Great Martyr George appeared to him and said:

"What is the cause of your illness, child?"

Theodore looked and saw an unclean spirit standing at a distance; pointing to him, Theodore said to the martyr:

"There is that vile and abominable one who brought this illness upon me."

St. George, seizing the demon, tormented him severely and drove him away, and taking Theodore by the hand, said:

"Arise and be well; now that wicked and treacherous one will not appear before your face."

Immediately Theodore rose and felt himself fully restored to health.

The loving-kind God, who gave His holy Apostles power over unclean spirits to cast them out and to heal every sickness in people, bestowed a similar power upon His beloved youth Theodore, and he began to work miracles to the glory of God.

One man brought his demon-possessed son to him in the church, begging him to heal him. Theodore, being still too young, did not know what to do and refused; then the man began to weep and, putting a whip into Theodore's hands, said:

"Servant of God, take this whip and, threatening, strike my son, saying these words: Depart, unclean spirit, from this youth in the name of my Lord."

The blessed Theodore did as that man had taught him, and the demon began to cry out in the youth:

"I will go, I will go; only leave me for one hour."

When Theodore withdrew to the sanctuary, the demon cried out:

"O torment! O great power of the Nazarene! Since it came down to earth, it has armed men against us, and now it has given authority over us to this insignificant youth. Woe is me! Being driven out by so young a youth, I am unable to endure the grace given to him from heaven. Great misfortune will come upon our race from this least one, for he will drive many of us out of human bodies; and the most grievous misfortune for me is that I am beginning to experience the power given to him, and I dare not return to my father the devil, cast out by this small child. If this had happened to me at the hands of some old man, my reproach and shame would not be so great. Cursed is the day on which this youth, terrible to us, was born!"

While the demon was crying out, St. Theodore took oil from the lamp, anointed the head of the demon-possessed youth with it, made the sign of the cross over him, and forbade the demon, saying:

"Come out now, treacherous spirit, and utter such words no more."

The demon cried out with a loud voice and, casting the youth at the feet of Theodore, went out; and the youth, by the grace of God, became well. All who lived in that country learned of this miracle and glorified God.

Theodore desired to imitate in the desert life St. John the Baptist and the Prophet Elijah, and he pondered where he might hide himself from people. To this end he climbed to a high part of the mountain and found there a secluded place, where he saw a large stone; beneath it he dug himself a cave. He then asked one of the clergy, a virtuous deacon,

to bring him a little bread and water at a set time, adjuring him in the name of God never to speak of him to anyone. From the cleric he took a coarse hair shirt, whereas until then he had always worn the soft garments given him by his mother, and he shut himself up in this cave. At his request the cleric covered over the entrance with earth, leaving only a small opening through which a loaf of bread and a cup of water might be passed in. So for two years St. Theodore lived in complete seclusion, like a buried corpse, and no one knew of it except the cleric. The people of that village came to church and, not seeing Theodore there, marvelled and wondered where he had gone. It happened at this time that military regiments passed through there, and some thought that the soldiers had taken Theodore and carried him off with them. They asked their prince to send a servant of his to the regiments to search for him; but, though they searched diligently there, they found nothing, and thought he had been devoured by wild beasts. His mother and all his household wept for him inconsolably as for one dead, and all the people of that village grieved for him. After two years had passed, the cleric, moved partly by the inconsolable weeping of Theodore's mother and partly fearing that he would die from such confinement, told of him. Then all went with haste and joy, and, opening the cave, they drew him out of it almost dead. But as soon as he saw the light of day, he was speechless for many hours. His head was covered with sores and worms, and his household wept at the sight of him and brought him into the church of St. George. His mother wished to take Theodore into her house to nurse him, but he would not in any way consent, and remained as before at the church of the martyr; his head, however, was completely healed within a few days. Theodosius, Bishop of Anastasiopolis, learned of this and came with his clergy to this village to see the servant of God Theodore; and, seeing him, he marvelled at his life. Moved by the prompting of the Holy Spirit, he first blessed Theodore to the lower ranks of the clergy, and then ordained him to the rank of presbyter, although he was only seventeen years old[11]. The bishop spoke of him thus:

11. According to the canons of the Church, men who had reached the age of thirty were usually ordained as presbyters, and those who had reached the age of thirty-five as bishops.

“A man such as this, in whom the grace of God dwells, making up for the time, is worthy to be ordained even before the proper time, for the holy Apostle Paul also deemed St. Timothy, while still very young, worthy of the rank of presbyter.”

To Theodore he then addressed these words:

"The Lord, who has counted you worthy of the priesthood, grants you also the episcopate, that you may shepherd His rational flock. But first receive the monastic rank, grow in faith and good works, and pray for me."

Having said this and blessed Theodore, the bishop departed to his own place, and the blessed Theodore began to offer the bloodless sacrifice, standing worthily before the throne of God. Desiring to see the holy places in Jerusalem, and finding a good companion, he went there and reached Jerusalem. There with great diligence and reverence he venerated the Life-giving Cross, the Holy Sepulchre of the Lord, and, going round the other holy places, venerated them and prayed. He visited the holy fathers who lived there in seclusion and in desert solitude, and was granted their prayers and blessings. Afterwards he came to the Hozevite Lavra, situated by the church of the Most Holy Theotokos near the Jordan, where God had already announced to the archimandrite concerning Theodore. In the Lavra, by God's command, he was clothed in the monastic habit and dismissed to his own place with a blessing.

On his return he continued to live by the church of the Holy Great Martyr George, serving God in holiness, shining, like the glorious Prophet Moses, with the grace of the Lord which abounded in him. By its power he healed all kinds of sicknesses that befell people, and, as one having authority, he cast out unclean spirits. His grandmother Elpidia, his aunt Dispenia and his young sister Vlatta did not wish to be parted from him, but, beholding his God-pleasing life, they strove according to their strength to imitate him both in fasting and in prayer, and from the labour of their hands they gave alms to the poor.

Before long his aunt Dispenia reposed in the Lord in good confession, and after her burial he took his twelve-year-old sister Vlatta, brought her to a women's monastery and left her there, betrothing her

to Christ; and the blessed Elpidia he settled for the time being in a house near himself. Living a holy and undefiled life, the virgin of Christ Vlatta, after three years, passed over into the bridal chamber of her immortal Bridegroom. When he learned of her death, St. Theodore rejoiced and gave thanks to God. Elpidia, however, at the saint's counsel withdrew into a women's monastery standing nearby, by the church of the holy martyr Christopher, whither the venerable one sent to her the demon-possessed and sick maidens brought to him for healing, so that Elpidia might instruct them how to pray and fast and might teach them good conduct. After his blessed mother had departed to the monastery, having no one in his service, he hired a workman to attend him. The providence of God willed to make Theodore a fisher of men (Mt. 4:19), and it began to send him certain people to live with him. First of all, a certain Epiphanius, young in years, moved by God-loving aspirations, came to him. The blessed Theodore rejoiced that God had not left him alone. Receiving Epiphanius, he clothed him in the monastic habit and instructed him in so holy a life that he too had power over demons, casting them out of people. Also a pious woman, who had received healing of her sickness from the venerable Theodore, brought to him her young son named Philumenus, intelligent and well taught in reading and writing. These three companions, servants of Christ, were like the ancient three youths in Babylon (cf. Dan. 3), bound together by one love and zeal for God; and among them was the Lord Himself, who says: "Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt. 18:20).

After some years, when the blessed Epiphanius had died in the Lord, there came in his place John, very zealous in virtue. At that time people came from a village called Protomaria to the venerable one, begging him to come to them, for not far away was a place inhabited by a multitude of unclean spirits, and no one could pass it without harm, neither people nor cattle, especially at midday and after sunset. The servant of God Theodore went to this place and ordered a small cave to be dug there; he shut himself into it for the whole winter and remained there, abiding in fasting and prayer until Pascha. The demons, unable to endure his presence there, fled, driven out as by weapons through

the prayers of the saint; and many times many people heard the woeful cries of the demons moaning that Theodore had cast them out. The people of that village had so strong a faith in him that, coming, they took earth from the cave in which the venerable one lived, and, mixing it into food or drink, gave it to sick people and cattle as a sure remedy, and by their faith received healing.

In that place there lived a believing man, by trade a blacksmith, whom the venerable one commanded to make an iron cage without a roof, so narrow that it was possible for a man only to stand in it; and in it he devised an unusual torment for his body. Many people learned of this and began to bring iron tools to the blacksmith, so that there was iron enough for the work; and when the cage was forged, it was carried with crosses to the venerable one at Sikeia. He set it over his cave and often shut himself in it for long periods, standing there like an immovable pillar and enduring every kind of weather. Since the cage had no roof, in summer the scorching sun burned him, and in winter the cruel frosts froze and bound the saint's body. Storms and winds assailed him, snow and rain soaked him, yet he remained insensible as a stone and hard as adamant. Almighty God granted him so great a patience, surpassing human understanding and nature, to the astonishment of men and to the glorification of the holy Divine Name. Theodore chose that iron cage not only as a voluntary prison, but also bound his whole body in iron fetters: he shod his feet in forged boots and wore similar armcoverings, put on heavy iron armour, girded himself with thick chains, and carried an iron staff with a cross upon its top. He arranged his life thus: after the feast of the Nativity of Christ, until the Theophany, he entered the cave bound with heavy iron chains, remaining in it without coming out until Pascha; after Pascha he shut himself in the cage. With such iron weight and self-chosen prison he tormented his flesh, afflicting and oppressing it as a slave and captive, so that it might not stir up inner strife. During the holy Forty Days he did not partake of food at all, except vegetables and bread made from spring-sown grain, and that only on Saturday and Sunday. God subdued to him the wild beasts that dwelt in the desert: for example, a terrible bear came to him for three years and took food from his hands, and a wolf also was fed by him.

The animals that came to and went from the saint did no harm to any man or beast, even if someone chanced to meet them. This was by the wondrous working of God, who glorified His servant, who glorifies Him.

Once a man afflicted with leprosy over his whole body came to Theodore, who had shut himself up in the cage, desiring to receive healing through his holy prayers. The Venerable bade the sick man take off his clothes, took water, and prayed to God thus:

"O Lord Jesus Christ our God, who through Thy prophet Elisha cleansed Naaman the Syrian of leprosy[12], and who Thyself, coming down to us in Thy compassion and becoming Man, didst heal the lepers by Thy word: look now upon us and upon this water, and, blessing it, grant it healing power, that it may be able to cleanse of leprosy this man who stands before us, to the glory of Thy holy Name."

Having prayed and signed the water with the sign of the Cross, he poured it over the man's head and over his whole body, whereupon the sick man was immediately delivered from leprosy and went away whole, glorifying God. Likewise a priest who was a leper, named Collyrius, came to the saint, and no sooner had he put on the saint's garment than he received healing in that same moment. Seeing such a life and the wonders of Theodore, the blessed Elpidia rejoiced in spirit. She brought many women to the monastic life and instructed them in a God-pleasing manner of living, for she herself was exceedingly virtuous and imitated her grandson in spiritual struggles. Elpidia learned of the approach of her own end through a revelation granted to her, and she came to her venerable grandson for a final visit and farewell greeting, and told him her vision, saying:

"My child and the light of my eyes! I saw in a vision a most beautiful youth, clothed in bright raiment, with golden hair, resembling the Holy Great Martyr George, as we see him depicted on an icon. He came to me, asking about you, desiring to learn from me the pattern of your life and of your psalmody. I told him everything in detail. He said to me:"

12. Naaman – commander of the army of the Syrian king Benhadad. The account of his healing from leprosy by the Prophet Elisha is found in 4 Kgdms. 6:1–19.[1*]

"When you sing the psalms, say thus: 'O bless the Lord, ye mountains and hills!' (Dan. 3:75)."

And then he said:

"O woman, you have received great mercy from God, in that you were granted to see your grandson in such a state; and to me, his helper, you are much indebted; but above all thanks is due to the common Lord and Creator God, who has deemed your grandson worthy to be among His holy servants. Be at peace, then, for until now you have labored."

The blessed Elpidia, having told her vision to the Venerable Theodore and given him a last kiss, withdrew to her cell; there, after being ill for a little while, she departed to the Lord and was buried by the Venerable with honor. After her burial there arrived someone from the city of Ancyra, who brought the Venerable the news that his mother Mary had died, and advised him to send for her property, since she had died without an heir. The saint answered him:

"You speak falsely, for my mother has not died."

But the messenger insisted that he had seen her dead with his own eyes; he again said:

"That is untrue; she has not died for me, she will not die in soul, but even now she is alive and will live forever."

And he paid no attention to the property she left behind, but himself fasted a whole week and offered fervent prayers to God for her soul. During the Venerable's stay in the cave, the church steward from Iliopolis in Galatia came to him and through his servant conveyed his tearful petition, saying:

"Have mercy upon me, servant of God, in the sorrow that has befallen me: I sent a servant to collect money for the church, and he, having gathered the money, ran away. I pursued him everywhere, searched for him, and could not find him. Pray to the Lord that He may show him to me, for all my property would not suffice to repay the church for what my servant has carried off."

The saint answered him:

"If you promise to let your servant go without punishment and not to take anything from him more than what he has taken, then the Lord

will comfort you and will put him into your hands. If you do not promise, you will not find him."

The steward promised not only not to beat him and not to take more from him, but even to add something of his own, if only the church's property might be restored, and said:

"My children and I shall be left naked if I am unable to repay the church for its stolen property."

Then the saint answered him:

"Go home in peace and be untroubled; trust in God, for He will soon comfort you."

Reassured, the steward set off home, having complete confidence in the words of the Venerable. The fugitive who had stolen the church's property stopped as if bound, on the spot near a village called Nicaea, and could not take a single step further; it seemed to him that he was running swiftly, whereas in fact he remained in the same place. People who happened to be walking along that road recognized the criminal, seized him and brought him to the steward. Thus everything he had taken was returned to the church, and the steward kept his promise to do him no harm: he released him, and came again to the Venerable and offered thanks.

Once, on the days of the holy Pentecost, a man brought his demon-possessed wife, and when the Venerable Theodore was casting out the unclean spirit, the demon cried out:

"Woe is me! Why are you angry with me, breaker of iron [13]? Am I to blame, for I entered her not of my own will. I was sent by the sorcerer Theodore, called Karappos, who lives in Mazamia."

But the servant of God, forbidding the evil spirit in the name of Jesus Christ, drove him out of that woman. And in that same year, in the month of June, the inhabitants of the village of Mazamia, having heard of the wonders wrought by the Venerable Theodore, came to him, begging with tears that he come and drive away the locusts which had descended like a cloud upon their fields and gardens. The saint went with them, entered their church and spent the night there in prayer; and in

13. This appellation is given to St. Theodore for his exploits of mortifying the flesh with various iron instruments, as is related in his Life.

the morning he went out into the fields, performed a general supplication there, and, taking three locusts in his hand, offered prayers to God for the people; and during the prayer the locusts died in his hand. Giving thanks to God, he said to the people:

"Return, children, to the church, for the Lord will soon show us His mercy."

Returning to the church, the saint celebrated the Divine Liturgy, and in the morning the people saw that all the locusts had died. Theodore Karappos, who lived in those parts, was kindled with envy against the saint Theodore, for he had been angry with him even before, on account of the casting out of the demon from the woman, which that sorcerer had sent into her. Angered at the saint and envying the wonderworking power of God within him, the sorcerer, summoning his demons, bade them go against the saint Theodore Sikeotes and torment him to death. But they could not approach him, because the Venerable always had a prayer upon his lips; and the demons were obliged to wait until he fell asleep. But when the saint slept, the grace of God, issuing from him like fire, scorched and drove away the demons; they returned again and rushed against the Venerable, and again, scorched and driven off, they returned in shame to him who had sent them. He, in vexation, reproached them, saying:

"Truly your power is nothing; if you could not approach him while he slept, what can you do to him when he is awake?"

And the demons affirmed, saying:

"As soon as we draw near to him, a fiery flame issues from his mouth and scorches us, which we cannot endure."

The sorcerer, inflamed with still greater malice and envy, put deadly poison into a fish and sent that fish as a gift to the Venerable. The servant of God, guarded by the grace of Christ, ate of that fish at his usual meal and remained unharmed. The sorcerer Theodore Karappos was greatly astonished at this, and, understanding the power of God and the impotence of the demons, was moved in soul; he came to the Venerable, fell at his holy feet, confessed his sins with tears, burned his magic books, renounced the works of Satan, and received holy baptism.

On returning to the monastery, the Venerable fell into a grievous illness and awaited death, for he saw holy Angels who had come to him, and thought they wished already to take his soul; he wept and sobbed that he was not ready for death. Above him was an icon of the holy physicians, the unmercenaries Cosmas and Damian; they appeared to him in a vision and, after the manner of physicians, felt the veins of his hands and conversed among themselves, as if despairing of his life, for his strength had already grown weak. They said to him:

"Why do you weep and grieve, brother?"

The sick man answered:

"Because I have not repented before God, my fathers, and because I am leaving this little flock not yet fully directed onto the true path and still in need of many instructions."

The saints said to him:

"Do you wish that we pray to God on your behalf, that He may prolong your life?"

The sick man answered:

"If you do this and obtain for me time for repentance, you will be the cause of many blessings for me, and you will receive a reward for my repentance."

The saints, turning to the Angels, asked them to wait a little, while they, going to the King and God, would ask Him concerning Theodore. The Angels promised, and the holy passion-bearers Cosmas and Damian went to the All-powerful King Christ our God, who once added fifteen years of life to Hezekiah [14]; and having entreated Him to add years of life to Theodore, they returned in a short time, having among them a youth like the Angels, but shining with still greater glory. This youth said to the Angels:

"Leave Theodore alive; for him the Lord of all, the King of Glory, has been entreated, and He has commanded him to be in the flesh."

And at once the holy Angels, with that most bright youth, withdrew to heaven. The holy Cosmas and Damian said to Theodore:

"Arise, brother, and attend to yourself and to your flock: the good and merciful Lord has received our prayers for you and has granted you

life, that you may labor for the food that does not perish, but abides unto life everlasting, so that you may secure salvation for many souls."

Having said this to him, the holy physicians became invisible. The Blessed Theodore came to himself, and, feeling himself altogether healed, rose at once, glorified God, and with great zeal gave himself to psalmody and fasting.

By the grace of God bestowed upon him, he worked miracles, healed various diseases, and cast out demons by his word. The report of his miracles spread everywhere; many marvelled and were moved to tenderness, left their homes, and came to him for the ascetic labors of monastic life. Many also who had received healing from him did not part from him, but remained there and served the needs of the monastery. For when a multitude of brethren had gathered, a large monastery was formed, and Theodore was archimandrite of his monastery. But since the church of the holy Great Martyr George was too small and could not hold all who came for the customary chants, the Venerable Father took care to build another church not far from the former, in the name of the holy Archangel Michael, more spacious. Having settled the brotherhood there, he sent his disciple Philumenus to the Bishop of Anastasiopolis to receive ordination to the rank of presbyter, and appointed him hegumen of this monastery. He himself devoted himself with great intensity to silence.

There was need of a silver vessel for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, for until then the mystery had been celebrated in a stone marble vessel. The Venerable Father sent his deacon to Constantinople to buy a silver vessel for the sacred service. When a clean, excellently made vessel was bought and brought to him, the saint rejected it, not wishing to perform the sacred rite in it, for he had perceived by vision that the vessel was unfit, black, and foul. The deacon praised its fine workmanship and pure silver, but the Venerable Father said:

"I too see, child, that the vessel is handsomely made and of fine silver, but it is defiled by an invisible uncleanness. If you do not believe

14. Hezekiah – king of Judah, who lived in the eighth century B.C. His miraculous healing by the prophet Isaiah is related in 4 Kgdms.

me, let us pray that the Lord open the eyes of your soul, and you will see."

As soon as they had knelt and prayed, not only the deacon but all the brethren present saw the vessel black as coal taken from the furnace, and they marvelled. But when the deacon took it into his hands, the vessel at once became again pure and bright. Taking it, he carried it back to Constantinople to the goldsmith from whom he had bought it, and told him why the Venerable Theodore had not accepted it. The goldsmith began to recall the silver, whence it came, and remembered that it had been from the possessions of a harlot, her unrighteous property. He marvelled at the foresight of the Venerable Father and asked forgiveness; he took back the vessel and exchanged it for another, most pure, asking for holy prayers on his behalf.

The deacon returned, brought the vessel to the monastery, told the Father and the brethren of what silver the first had been made, and all glorified God and marvelled at the foresight of the saint.

Once, people came to the Venerable Theodore from the village of Vuzia, not far from Gratianopolis, on the following matter: they were building a stone bridge over a river there, and when they were digging stones out of the earth on a neighboring hill and hewing boards, they saw a multitude of demons coming out of a pit, who attacked men and animals and tormented them; others, like brigands, set ambushes on the road and wounded passers-by. The petitioners implored the Venerable Father to come to their village and deliver them from the demonic assault, and Theodore went with them, trusting in God. As soon as he drew near their village, the demons that were in the people, perceiving his approach, came out to meet him, crying:

"Woe, woe! Why, leaving Galatia, do you come here, destroyer of iron? We know why you have come, but we will not obey you as the spirits did in Galatia; we are far more wicked and stronger than they!"

The Venerable Father, rebuking them, commanded them to be silent. The next morning he gathered the people, led a cross procession around the whole village, and, ascending the top of the hill, poured forth hot prayers to God for a long time. At once the demons that had come out there, by the power of God, again appeared there in the form

of flies, mice, and hares, and he drove them all into the pit, sealed it with the sign of the Cross, and ordered it filled with earth and stones. Thus he delivered the village from the demonic affliction. In a similar way he delivered many other villages, lands, and houses from demons, and cast out wicked spirits from a multitude of people, who trembled at the mere mention of his name.

Of the Venerable Father's disciples, many were known and great in their virtues. Thus, for example, the Blessed Arsin the Recluse, who lived in a narrow cell, remained in silence, taking food only every third day: a little bread and raw greens or boiled vegetables and water in measure; during the holy Great Lent he ate only on Saturdays and Sundays, and even then only dry food. Two other men, Evagrius and Andrew, lived a similar life, having their own enclosures not far from Arsin. The Venerable Theodore rejoiced greatly over their honorable lives and gave thanks to God. All three agreed to go to Jerusalem to venerate the holy places, and they asked the Father to dismiss them with his blessing. He permitted it, and they arrived there and visited all the surrounding lavras and hermitages. Evagrius wished to remain there, and, coming to the Lavra of the Venerable Sabbas, he lived in holiness, showing himself by his deeds to be a disciple of Theodore. Arsin and Andrew returned to the Father in Galatia and asked him to let them live in different places for silence. Andrew, with the Father's blessing, settled on the hill of Vrian, eight stadia from the monastery. Arsin withdrew to the mountainous part of Potamia, where he chose for himself a place far from human habitations, of which it was said that it was the dwelling of demons. There he prayed, saying:

"O God, by the prayers of my father Theodore, keep me, a sinner, and protect me from the snares of demons, and help me to please Thee in this place."

First of all he built himself a wooden cell and wintered in it. Then he set up a high pillar, and, having spent forty years on it in great patience, he departed to the Lord. And Elpidius, by the instruction of the Venerable Theodore, advanced considerably in virtue. After several years of living with the Father, he went off with his blessing to the east, settled near Mount Sinai, and, having lived a long time in silence,

died righteously. After him this place was called by the holy Fathers of Sinai "the Silence of Elpidius."

Also Leontius, a disciple of our Father Theodore, was wondrous in his solitary life. He kept silence near Permatia, and, having been granted the gift of prophecy, he foretold the future. Thus he foretold the invasion of the Persians and his own murder by them, which came to pass, for when he would not leave his silent cell, he was killed in it by the Persians. Then Theodore, who fasted on Mount Drakonia, and Stephen by the river Psilia, and many other disciples of the Venerable Theodore shone forth with good deeds; some lived with him, and others settled in various desert places.

The Venerable Theodore had the desire once more to visit the holy places of Jerusalem, and, taking two of his disciples, he went. At that time in Palestine, where the city of Jerusalem is, there was drought and no rain, and men and animals suffered want because of lack of water; all the ditches and reservoirs in which water gathers had dried up. The people prayed much, asking God for rain, but received none, because the Lord kept that grace for His servant Theodore and therefore led him into Palestine. There were some from the land of Galatia who knew the Venerable Theodore and had heard of his wonder-workings; they said to the people:

"We know a holy father in our country who could, by a single prayer, fill the whole universe with rain, as the prophet Elijah once did."

When the Venerable Theodore came to Jerusalem and venerated the Life-giving Wood of the Cross and the Life-bearing Tomb of Christ, the pilgrims from Galatia recognized him, and soon a report of him spread through the holy city and the surrounding monasteries and lavras. A multitude of monks gathered, and all the clergy surrounded the saint, rejoicing at his coming to them, and begged him in the name of the Patriarch to obtain rain from the Lord for the parched land. The saint refused, acknowledging himself a sinner and unworthy, but they implored him and said:

"We trust, Father, that when you join your prayers with the prayers of other fathers, then God will have mercy on us and send rain upon the earth."

And the saint said to them:

"If you so believe, let it be to you according to your faith."

After the celebration of the lity, when the people were going in procession, the Venerable Father turned to them and said:

"Change your garments, children, for you will get wet, because for the sake of your faith the Lord will soon show His mercy."

When they were outside the city, he commanded them to halt in one place, and, stretching his hands toward heaven, he began to pray fervently; at once a small cloud appeared from the west and, growing larger, covered the whole sky within an hour. When the saint had finished his prayer, he bade the praying people return quickly to avoid the rain. Suddenly there fell an exceedingly great rain, and all hastened into the city to the church, for they were all thoroughly soaked. The rain did not cease until it had watered the whole earth and filled all the ditches, reservoirs, and hollows. The Venerable Theodore, fearing that people would begin to praise and honor him for such a miracle, hid himself from all with his two disciples, left the city, and went to his Galatian monastery of Sikeot. But even in his own country, in many neighboring places, at the petition of the people, he worked similar miracles: he brought down rains, purified the air, increased the fruits of fields and gardens, stopped floods and inundations, and foretold the future.

To the voivode Maurice, who was returning to Constantinople after the Persian war by way of Galatia and came to the Venerable Theodore to ask for his prayers and blessing, he prophesied that he would become emperor. When this came to pass, Maurice[15] wrote to his prophet, this holy father, asking for his prayers for himself and his realm, and added: "Ask of me whatever you wish." The Venerable Theodore sent the blessed Philumenus to him and wrote that the emperor should give bread to the monastery for the multitude of the poor who came to him every day. The emperor then wrote to his stewards in Galatia that they should release to the monastery of Theodore six hundred measures of wheat each year, and in addition he donated precious vessels to the church.

15. Maurice reigned from 582 to 602.

Seeing his flock grow day by day, and a multitude of people flocking to his monastery for prayers and healings, he dismantled the church of the holy Great Martyr George, which was very small, and built a larger one by a miracle: he commanded a huge stone that stood immovable to shift and move from its place to another. And when lime that had not yet been slaked was being carted from the nearby district of Evarzia for the building of the church, a rain cloud suddenly appeared, and the workers feared that the lime might catch fire and burn up the carts and the animals. Then the Venerable Theodore, by his prayer, divided the cloud in two, and heavy rain fell on both sides of the road, while not a single drop fell on the lime or the cart until everything had been brought to the site of the church building and unloaded from the carts.

When the construction of the church was nearing completion, Timothy, the bishop of Anastasiopolis, who had succeeded Theodosius, departed this life, and the citizens went to Paul, archbishop of the metropolis of Ancyra, to ask him to appoint as bishop of their city the Venerable Theodore, archimandrite of the Lavra of Sikeote. The archbishop was glad and sent for the blessed Theodore, that he might be brought to him with honor. At that time the Venerable, having shut himself into a cave, was dwelling in silence and diligently performing his customary prayers. When the clergy and the citizens of Anastasiopolis came to him and asked him to consent to be their bishop, he would not even hear of it, but they forcibly opened his cell, led out the Venerable, seated him on the episcopal chariot, and brought him to Ancyra with joy and rejoicing. When his brethren wept and sobbed for their father, who was being taken away from them, he sent word to them:

"Do not grieve, brethren, but believe me that I will not forsake you. There is nothing on earth that could separate me from you."

Thus the Venerable was ordained bishop of Anastasiopolis by the metropolitan of Ancyra, Paul, although he did not wish to accept such a rank. When he had accepted it, a certain well-known man had this vision: a most bright and very great star descended from heaven upon the church and with its rays illumined not only the city and the country but also all the surrounding lands and cities. Truly this Venerable, on the

episcopal throne, appeared to the world like a candle on a candlestand, enlightening and astonishing the universe by his countless miracles and by the example of his wondrous life. Often he visited his Lavra of Sikeote and comforted the brethren, and he consecrated the church of the holy Great Martyr George, which had been built through his zeal. What and how many miracles he performed while a bishop cannot be told in detail; he bore heavy labors, having diligent care for the flock entrusted to him. Yet the Venerable also grieved much that his silence had been interrupted, and he always carried in his soul the unceasing desire to lay down the episcopacy and return again to the monastery for silence.

Some years later the blessed Theodore again felt the desire to venerate the holy places in Jerusalem, and, taking with him two brethren from his monastery, the archdeacon John and Martin, he set out on the journey with them; while going round the holy places he did not reveal his episcopal rank, but went about as a simple elder.

It came into his mind not to return home but to live in some monastery there, for he saw that for the sake of the episcopal rank he had been compelled to abandon the ascetic labors of a monk. And so he went to the Lavra of St. Sabbas, asked for a cell for himself, and lived in it in silence from the feast of the Nativity of Christ until Pascha. After Pascha the two brethren who had come with him, John and Martin, kept speaking to him unceasingly about returning home, but he would not listen to them. And one night, in a dream-vision, the holy Great Martyr George appeared to him, put a staff into his hands, and said:

"Hasten to leave here, and let us return to the fatherland; you must not linger here, having forsaken your homeland."

Theodore said:

"I cannot go back to my own place, for I do not desire the episcopacy."

The martyr answered him:

"I shall soon release you from this rank; only return, for many grieve for you."

After this admonition the Venerable took his two disciples and set out for his country. Approaching Galatia, he stopped at the Druinian monastery that he came upon along the way, and he ordered his companions not to tell who he was. The monks of this monastery had long heard of the Venerable Theodore as an extraordinary man and wished to see him. Unrecognized by those monks, the Venerable quietly stayed in the monastery guesthouse, being received by the guestmaster Anicetus, and when Theodore's disciples were questioned about the elder, who he was, they said that he was wandering from some distant land. During the evening meal he looked at his disciples, who were eating their food with particular pleasure, for they were hungry, and said to them:

"Truly, children, we eat like Galatians."

And an hour later he repeated the same thing. Hearing this, Anicetus thought to himself whether this elder was not from Galatia. In the evening, when the elder, as was his custom, lay down on the ground for the night, Anicetus took the two disciples aside and urged them to say who this elder was; then they revealed to him that it was Theodore, the wonderworker of Sikeote, bishop of Anastasiopolis, and Anicetus hastened at once to report it to the hegumen Stephen and the brethren. Great was their joy at seeing him whom they had greatly desired to see. The time came for the morning chanting, and when the elder rose and made his way to the church, the hegumen with the brethren met him at the doors, and, falling at his feet, bowed to him as to a wonderworker and a bishop, asking for his blessing. They begged the saint to stay with them for several days, that they might enjoy the contemplation of his angelic face and be satisfied with his sweet conversations, and the Venerable remained with them quite a long time. Soon the report of him spread throughout the whole region, and many of the people came to the monastery, bringing their sick to the saint, and by the grace of Christ he healed them all.

After this the Venerable returned to his flock and, while carrying on his customary pastoral labors, did not cease to think of how he might lay down the episcopacy. Moreover, the blessed Antiochus the hermit, returning to his home from Constantinople, happened to be with him

and advised him the same thing, for this Antiochus had been sent from the eastern land to the emperor Maurice to ask for protection against enemies for the city of Sinophrinus. Antiochus was an old man, about a hundred years of age; for sixty years he had drunk neither wine nor oil, and for thirty years he had not eaten bread, feeding only on bitter herbs with salt and vinegar, and drinking water. This blessed father, passing through Galatia and Anastasiopolis, was received by the Venerable with honor and joy; he refreshed him and was much consoled by spiritual conversations with him. The blessed Antiochus said of Theodore to his disciples:

"I have not seen such a holy man until now. The Lord has revealed to me his life."

Theodore too spoke of Antiochus to his brethren:

"In the whole eastern desert I have neither seen nor heard of such a servant of God."

From the Venerable Antiochus, St. Theodore asked for useful counsel, telling him of his intention to lay down the episcopacy; Antiochus praised him for such an intention and advised him to accomplish what he desired soon.

When Antiochus had gone, the Venerable Theodore was grieved by the thefts of church property; moreover, he had some secret enemies in the eparchy, who, stirred up by the unseen enemy, were moved by envy and hatred; by God's permission they once gave him poison, and the Venerable lay for three days voiceless and motionless as one dead, so that a rumor of the saint's death already spread through the city. After three days the Most Holy Lady, our Theotokos, appeared to him and made known to him the cause of his illness from the poison secretly given to him, and pointed out the haters who had given the poison; then, taking from a cloth that was in her hands three grains, she gave them to him and said:

"Eat this, and from now on you will suffer no evil at all."

Having eaten these grains, the Venerable came to himself, felt himself entirely healthy, and, rising, gave thanks to Christ God and His Most Pure Mother. He did not denounce his malicious enemies nor speak of them to anyone, but offered prayer to God for them, that He

not hold this sin against them. To the holy Great Martyr George he always prayed that he would release him from the episcopacy, as he had promised in the vision when the Venerable was unwilling to return from Palestine to Galatia.

It must not be passed over in silence that in Anastasioupolis a tax was established, payable each year from the Church estates for the bishop's table, in the amount of three hundred and sixty-five gold coins. Of this tax the Venerable Theodore spent only forty gold coins on the table for the whole year, and gave the rest to the Holy Church; and the alms that came to him from other sources he distributed to the poor. Having at last resolved to lay down the episcopal office altogether, the Venerable Theodore first turned to God with fervent and lengthy prayer over many days, that his purpose might not be counted to him as a sin; and having received from God, by revelation, permission for what he asked, he gathered all the clergy and all the citizens and said to them:

"You know, brethren, that you forcibly tore me away from the monastery and compelled me to accept the burden of the episcopate; and I told you then that I was not worthy to govern you, but you did not heed me and acted according to your own will. And now it is already the eleventh year that I have grieved you, and am myself grieved by you. I beg you, seek for yourselves a shepherd who can please you; for my part, I can no longer be your bishop, and I return, as an unworthy monk, to my own monastery, in which I promised to labour for God until the end of my life."

After these words he took with him from his monastery the archdeacon John and set out to the Metropolitan of Ancyra, Paul, asking him to appoint another bishop for Anastasioupolis. A great dispute arose between them: the metropolitan would by no means release the Venerable Theodore, for, he said, it was impossible to find another man worthy of this rank. Theodore, however, refused most earnestly and said that this burden was beyond his measure and strength. It was necessary to make this known in Constantinople to the Most Holy Patriarch Cyriacus[16] and the pious Emperor Maurice. By God's inspiration

16. Cyriacus was patriarch from 595 to 606 A.D.

they wrote to the Metropolitan of Ancyra that he should not hinder the servant of God, who strove for stillness, but release him, as he asked.

Thus the Venerable Theodore, delivered from the burden of the episcopate, was filled with joy at finding himself free from many cares; and, having gone to his monastery, he dwelt in his cell in stillness and passed his life in ascetic labours. Often he celebrated the divine services, offering the bloodless sacrifices, and during the Liturgy he was granted to behold with his own eyes the grace of the Holy Spirit in the form of a bright purple robe descending from above and covering the Holy Gifts. He related this to one of his fellow celebrants, the virtuous hieromonk Julian, at his earnest entreaty. When he beheld this, he was filled with ineffable spiritual gladness, and his beautiful face was illumined with a wondrous light and transformed, so that the priests and deacons serving with him saw the divine radiance upon the Venerable's face and marvelled.

Once the following happened: in the month of July, on the 16th day, the feast of the holy Martyr Antiochus, in the church, when Theodore, the holy hierarch of God, was celebrating the Liturgy and the time came for the elevation of the Holy Gifts, he, according to custom, lifted the diskos with the holy Lamb upward and proclaimed: "Holy things for the holy." The divine Lamb of its own accord rose higher into the air above the diskos, lifted by an unseen hand, and then descended again onto the diskos to its place. Seeing such a miracle, all who were then celebrating at the Holy Table were filled with great fear and wonder; and the Venerable Theodore shed streams of tears and, rejoicing ineffably, glorified Christ God, who truly abides in His Most Pure Mysteries.

The pious Emperor Maurice and the Most Holy Patriarch Cyriacus desired to see the Venerable Theodore, of whom they had heard much, and wrote to him to come to them in Constantinople, that they might be granted his prayers and blessing. The Venerable could not disobey them and set out there, where all received him with great honour. He lived only a short time in Constantinople, but by the power of God he worked many miracles: he restored sight to a blind boy, raised a paralysed woman from her bed, delivered many demoniacs from the devil's

torment, healed a woman with an issue of blood by prayer, cleansed the emperor's son of leprosy, granted childbearing by his blessing to those barren in marriage, and performed many other glorious deeds, consoling all with the grace of the Lord; after which he returned to his monastery. But later, not soon afterward, he was summoned a second time to Constantinople, in the reign of the Emperor Phocas[17], at the call of the Most Holy Patriarch Thomas[18], who had occupied the throne after Cyriacus. The reason for his summons was this: an extraordinary event occurred in the land of Galatia. In one of its cities, during a public procession with crosses, large wooden crosses suddenly began, by some wondrous power, to shake violently of themselves, striking one another and breaking. The news of this miracle spread everywhere, even to Constantinople; then the Most Holy Patriarch Thomas sent to the Venerable Theodore, asking him to come to him quickly. When the saint arrived, the holy patriarch asked him about the wonder and what it might portend. The saint replied that the wonder had indeed occurred, but refused to say what it foretold, saying that he did not know that hidden mystery of God. Then the Most Holy Patriarch fell at his feet in supplication and by this humility persuaded the Venerable to foretell the future. The elder said that the crosses' shaking, striking and breaking against one another signified great calamities to come upon the Church of God and the Greek kingdom, from external enemies on the one hand and internal ones on the other. From without, a terrible invasion of enemies lay ahead; from within, division of faith would follow among Christians, there would be a general persecution, people would plunder and destroy everything belonging to one another, many churches would be laid waste and emptied, and all this would happen soon. Hearing this, the patriarch was terrified and begged the Venerable to pray to the Lord for him, that He might receive his soul before the foretold devastation came, so that he might not witness the calamities coming upon the Church.

Some time later, while the Venerable Theodore was still in Constantinople, in the church of St. Stephen, the patriarch fell ill and sent

17. Emperor Phocas reigned from 602 to 610 A.D.
18. Thomas was patriarch from 607 to 610 A.D.

to the Venerable, who had at that time withdrawn into seclusion and was fasting, to announce his illness and ask him to entreat God to grant him a speedy death. The saint refused and would not do so; then the patriarch earnestly asked him a second time that he might die before troubles fell upon the Church. The Venerable did the hierarch's will, prayed to God for his death, and sent to him, saying:

"Shall I come to you, or shall we together stand before our Lord there?"

The patriarch answered through the messenger:

"Do not break your silence, father; it is enough for me that you have said this: there we shall see each other before our Lord."

On that same day, before the evening hour, the Most Holy Patriarch Thomas joyfully departed from the body and went to the Lord. After the patriarch's death the Venerable Theodore returned to his monastery, and within a few years his own end drew near. Before it, he performed many great and glorious miracles and prophesied much concerning future events. Before his end he saw the holy Great Martyr George twice in dreams: the first time he appeared to him, offering a traveller's staff and calling him to journey with him to a distant place; then he appeared to him seated on a horse, leading another horse, and saying:

"Mount this horse, Theodore, and follow me."

From this the Venerable Theodore understood his speedy departure from the earth; he told his disciples of it with joy, and foretold his death after Pascha. So it came to pass. When he was dying he saw the holy Angels, who came to take him, and with a joyful face he gave up his soul into their hands.

His death took place in the third year of the reign of Heraclius[19].

His Life and miracles were written by his disciple Eleusius, who had received from the Venerable the monastic name George. He relates that his parents, though married for a long time, had no children, and asked the Venerable Theodore that by his prayers and blessing they might become parents. The Venerable, taking their belts, blessed them and, re-

19. Emperor Heraclius reigned from 610 to 641 A.D. The repose of St. Theodore Siceota took place in 613 A.D.

turning them, foretold the end of their barrenness; and indeed Eleusius was born to them. When they had raised him, they brought him to the Venerable and gave him over to the service of God. Having lived twelve years with the Venerable, he witnessed ineffable miracles, which he described at great length; but we have drawn from him and briefly set forth only a few, for the benefit of our souls. Let us glorify, then, the wondrous God, who is glorified in His wonder-workers, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Troparion, Tone 2:

Sanctified from the swaddling-clothes, and revealed to be filled with grace, thou didst illumine the world with miracles and drive away multitudes of demons, O hierarch who didst minister sacredly, Theodore; wherefore pray to the Lord for us.

Kontakion, Tone 3:

As in a fiery chariot thou didst ascend by thy virtues, O God-bearer, and hast hastened to the heavenly dwellings; like an Angel thou didst dwell with men, and like a man thou dost rejoice in the midst of the Angels. Therefore thou hast been shown to be a divine dwelling-place of miracles, O Venerable Theodore.

* * *

Life of our Venerable Father Vitalis the Monk

Житие преподобного отца нашего Виталия монаха

In the time when the Alexandrian patriarchal throne was occupied by the most holy Patriarch John the Almsgiver, there came to Alexandria a monk named Vitalius, from the monastery of the Venerable Seridus. This monk, being sixty years of age, had chosen for himself such a manner of life as, to men who see only the outward appearance of a person, seemed unclean and sinful, but to God, who looks upon the inward and searches the hearts of men (Ps. 7:10), was pleasing and acceptable. For that elder, wishing secretly to turn sinners and impious men to repentance, appeared himself, in the opinion of men, to be a sin-

ner and an impious man. He drew up for himself a list of all the harlots who lived in Alexandria, and prayed to God with special zeal for each of them, that He would turn them from their sinful life. The elder hired himself out for work in the city from morning until evening, and for his labor took twelve copper coins. With one coin he bought himself a bean, and after sunset he ate it, for having labored the whole day he was fasting. Then, coming to the house of harlotry, he gave the remaining money to some harlot and said to her:

"I beg you, for this money keep yourself in purity the whole of this night, committing no sin with anyone."

And having so spoken, he shut himself in with her in her room. She slept upon her bed, while the elder, standing in a corner, remained the whole night without sleep, quietly reading the Psalms of David and praying for her to God until morning. In the morning, as he departed from her, he besought her with an oath not to tell anyone of his deed.

He acted thus for a long time, laboring in fasting all the days, and at night entering to the harlots and remaining without sleep in prayer. Each night he went in to a different one, until, having gone round them all, he began again with the first.

The Lord God, seeing such an ascetic feat of His servant, aided him, for some of the harlots, put to shame by such virtues of Vitalius, themselves rose to pray, and kneeling together with him prayed. The saint persuaded such to repent, threatening them with the Dread Judgment of God and eternal torments of Gehenna after death, and encouraging them with the mercy of God and the hope of receiving the eternal blessings of heaven. Then they, coming into the fear of God, humbled themselves and promised to amend their lives. And many of them abandoned their former sinful life and married lawful husbands. Others, desiring to live in complete purity, entered women's monasteries and there spent their lives in fasting and tears. Others lived in the world without a husband in chastity, nourishing themselves by the labor of their hands. And not one of the harlots told anyone of the chaste life of Saint Vitalius, for whenever any one of them began to tell people that Vitalius came to them not for sin but for the sake of their salvation, Vitalius, hearing of it, grieved greatly that his blameless life was being revealed,

and prayed to God that He would punish that woman, so that all the others also would be struck with fear and would not dare to tell people of his ascetic deeds. Immediately, by divine permission, that woman fell into a frenzy, seeing which the other women were struck with fear and did not dare to reveal anything to people about the holiness of Vitalius's life. The people said to the woman who had fallen into the frenzy:

"See how God repays you for having at first said that this monk comes to you not for fornication; here it is clearly revealed that he is a fornicator."

And all were scandalized about him, and every day they reproached him, saying:

"Go away, wretch; the harlots are waiting for you," and they spat upon him.

The saint, however, enduring all with meekness, rejoiced to hear abuse and rebuke from people, taking comfort in the thought that they considered him a great sinner. Sometimes he said to those who reproached him:

"Do I not have a body, as do all men? Did God create monks without flesh? Truly monks too are such men."

Some advised him:

"Father," they said, "take one of the harlots for a wife, and take off the monastic habit, so that monasticism may not be blasphemed through you."

He, however, as if angered, answered them:

"I do not wish to listen to you; what good is it for me to take a wife and care for her, for children, for a household, and to spend all my days in cares and labors? Why do you condemn me? For it is not you who will have to answer for me before God. Each take care of himself, and leave me alone. There is one Judge of all, God, who will render to each according to his deeds."

Thus the Venerable Vitalius concealed his virtue from people.

Some of the clergy slandered him before the most holy Patriarch of Alexandria, John the Almsgiver, saying that an elder was seducing the whole city, entering the houses of harlots every night. But the most holy patriarch did not believe the slanderers, since he had already earli-

er been led into error by slanderers, when a chaste and holy monk, who was moreover a eunuch[20] and had baptized a Jewish woman, was innocent yet was handed over to beatings, the patriarch having believed those who had slandered him. Remembering that case, the patriarch did not heed those who informed against Vitalius, and said to them:

"Cease condemning, and especially do not condemn monks. Do you not know what happened at the first Ecumenical Council,[21] when some of the bishops and clergy handed to the Emperor Constantine the Great, of blessed memory, written denunciations of one another's sins? The emperor, ordering a lit candle to be brought, burned their writings without even reading them, and at the same time said: 'If I with my own eyes had seen a bishop or a monk committing a sin, I would have covered such a one with my own garment, so that no one would see him sinning.'"

Thus the most holy patriarch shamed the informers. The servant of God Vitalius, however, did not cease caring for the salvation of sinful souls, and no one knew of his virtuous life until his death.

Once, when the Venerable Vitalius was coming out of the house of harlots at dawn, he was met by a young fornicator who was going to the harlots to sin with them. Seeing Vitalius, the youth struck him hard on the cheek and said:

"Wretch and impious one, will you not repent and cease from your impure life, so that the name of Christ may be dishonored by you still more?"

The saint answered him:

"Believe me, man, that for me, a humble one, you too will receive a blow on the cheek such that all Alexandria will run together at your cry."

Some time later the Venerable Vitalius shut himself up in his small and narrow cell, which he had built near the gate called the "Solar" gate, and there peacefully departed to the Lord. No one in the city

20. That is, a eunuch.

21. The First Ecumenical Council was convened in 325 A.D. at Nicaea on account of the false teaching of the presbyter Arius, who impiously declared the Son of God to be a creature of God the Father.

knew of it. At that time there appeared before the aforementioned youth, the fornicator who had struck the cheek of the venerable elder, a demon in the form of a terrible Ethiopian, who struck him hard on the cheek and said:

"Receive the blow which the monk Vitalius has sent you."

Immediately the youth fell into demonic frenzy, and falling to the ground he rolled about on it in fury, so that foam came from his mouth; at the same time he tore his clothing and cried out so loudly that the inhabitants of all Alexandria ran together at his terrible cry. For a long time he suffered from the demon. After some hours, however, coming somewhat to himself, the youth hastened to the cell of Vitalius, crying out:

"Have mercy on me, servant of God, for I have sinned against you, greatly offending you with a blow on the cheek. Now I have received, as you foretold, a worthy recompense."

So crying out, he ran quickly, accompanied by the people. When he drew near the elder's cell, the demon, casting the youth down upon the ground, vanished.

The youth, having fully come to himself, began to tell the people how he had struck the elder on the cheek and how the elder had foretold that he would receive a recompense for it. Then they knocked at the door of the elder's cell, but received no answer. When they broke down the door, they saw him standing in the middle of the cell on his knees, as if praying; the holy soul of the elder had departed to the Lord. In his hand he held a sheet of paper, on which was written:

"Men of Alexandria! Do not judge before the time, until the Lord, the Righteous Judge, comes."

At this time there came there a demoniac woman who had previously wished to tell people about the holy life of Vitalius, as was mentioned above. She came, informed of the elder's repose by an Angel who had appeared to her, and, touching the honorable remains of the saint, immediately received healing from her demoniac state. In the same way many blind and lame people began to receive healing at the touch of the body of the Venerable One.

Hearing of the repose of the Venerable One, all those women whom he, by his admonitions, had turned to repentance for their sins, gathered at his tomb with lit candles and lamps, weeping and grieving as for their father and teacher. At the same time, in the hearing of all the people, they told of the virtue of the elder, who had not touched even one of them with so much as his hand, and who came to them not for sin but to save them. The people, hearing their account, grew angry at them and said:

"Why did you hide from us the holiness of the life of this honorable elder, for we, being in ignorance, have sinned greatly against him by condemning and reproaching him?"

The women answered the people's reproaches thus:

"We were afraid, for this elder with great oaths forbade us to tell anyone about his life, and as soon as one of our companions began to reveal his secret to people, she fell into a frenzy. Therefore each of us, fearing such punishment, kept silent."

And the whole people marveled at such a servant of God, who had so humbly concealed the holiness of his life from men. While all men thought him a great sinner, he was a friend of God and a pure vessel of the Holy Spirit. People reproached one another, ashamed of their folly, that they had condemned such a well-pleasing servant of God and had caused offense and insult to a man who was innocent and pure in heart.

When the full account of all that had happened reached the most holy Patriarch John the Almsgiver, he came with his entire clergy to the elder's cell. Seeing the aforementioned letter, in which the elder had admonished them not to condemn him, and seeing the miracles that were taking place, he said to those clerics who had informed him against the Venerable One:

"You see, had I believed your words and offended the innocent holy elder, I too would have received blows upon the face, just as the young man who had slandered the holy youth received them. But I, a humble man, give thanks to God that I did not heed your denunciations and thereby escaped both sin and retribution."

Nevertheless, those who had slandered and condemned the Venerable One were greatly put to shame.

After this, the most holy Patriarch took the honorable relics of the Venerable Vitalius, carried them through the whole city, and in the presence of all the women who had repented of their sins, weeping and sobbing, laid them to rest with honor, glorifying God, who has many faithful servants unknown to men.

The same man who had received blows from the demon renounced the world and became a monk. And many of the inhabitants of Alexandria, taught by the virtuous life of Vitalius, made it their rule never to condemn anyone. Let us also imitate them in this, aided by the prayers of our Venerable Father Vitalius and by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom glory is offered for ever. Amen.

* * *



THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF APRIL

April 23

23 апреля

New Calendar April 23 · Old Calendar May 6 (civil dates)

Passion of the Holy Great Martyr George the Victory-Bearer

Страдание святого великомученика Георгия Победоносца

The unworthy ruler of the Roman Empire, the impious Diocletian,[1] was a fierce adherent and patron of idol-worship. Above all the gods he honored Apollo,[2] who was reputed to be a prophet of the future. For the demon dwelling in his lifeless idol prophesied of things to come, but these predictions never came to pass.

Once Diocletian inquired of Apollo concerning a certain matter.[3] The demon answered him:

"I cannot truly foretell the future, for I am hindered by righteous men, which is why the magical tripods in the temples also tell lies:[4] the righteous destroy our power."

Diocletian began to ask the priests what these righteous men were, on whose account the god Apollo could not prophesy. The priests answered that the righteous on earth were the Christians. Hearing this, Diocletian was filled with wrath and fury against the Christians, and renewed the persecution against them that had ceased. He drew his

1. The Emperor Diocletian, a fierce persecutor of Christianity, reigned from 284 A.D. to 305 A.D.

2. Apollo was one of the most venerated Greco-Roman pagan gods. Apollo was considered the god of the sun and of intellectual enlightenment, and also the guardian of public welfare and the foreteller of the future.

3. In all difficult circumstances of life, the pagan emperors had the custom of seeking counsel from priests, the servants of idols, who supposedly revealed to them the will of the gods. This custom was especially developed in ancient Greece. Here, among other places, the Delphic oracle (oracle-place) was famous, where there were special women-prophetesses (Pythias).

4. Pagan priests sat upon tripods when they inquired of their gods.

sword against the righteous, innocent and blameless people of God, and sent out orders for their execution throughout all the lands of his kingdom. And so the prisons, instead of being filled with adulterers, robbers and wicked men, were filled with those who confessed the true God. The customary methods of torture were set aside as unsatisfactory, and the most savage tortures were devised, to which great numbers of Christians were subjected daily and everywhere. From all sides, especially from the East, many written denunciations of the Christians were brought to the emperor. These accusations reported that the people who would not obey the imperial commands and called themselves Christians were so numerous that one must either leave them to remain in their faith or make war upon them. Then the emperor summoned from everywhere his anphipates and hegemons to a council at Nicomedia,[5] gathered his princes, boyars and the whole of his senate, and, disclosing to them his fury against the Christians, ordered each to give counsel according to his understanding as to how to deal with those who had abandoned paganism. After many speeches by those present at the council, the tyrant declared that nothing was more honorable and more fitting than the veneration of the ancient ancestral gods. When all agreed with what the emperor had said, he continued:

"If you all think thus and desire to carry it out diligently, and if you value my favor, then strive by every means to uproot throughout our whole kingdom the Christian faith, which is opposed to our gods. So that you may accomplish this more successfully, I myself will help you with all my strength."

All received this imperial word with praise. Diocletian and the senate gathered for counsel on the extirpation of Christianity a second and a third time. Then the decision was proclaimed to the people, so that it might become an irrevocable decree.

At that time in the Roman army there was a marvelous soldier of Christ, the holy George, by birth from Cappadocia,[6] the son of Christi-

5. Nicomedia was a large city of Asia Minor in antiquity, situated at the northeastern corner of the gulf formed by the Sea of Marmara. It received its name from its founder, the Bithynian king Nicomedes I, who lived in the 3rd century B.C. Today, on the site of the once-glorious Nicomedia, there is a small town called Izmit.

6. Cappadocia is a region of Asia Minor.

an parents, who from childhood had been brought up by them in piety. While still a child he lost his father, who had died tortured for confessing Christ. George's mother moved with him to Palestine, since that was her homeland and she had rich possessions there.

When he came of age, the holy George was distinguished by the beauty of his face, by his courage and the strength of his body, which is why he was appointed a tribune[7] in a famous military regiment. In this rank he showed such bravery in battle that the emperor Diocletian, who did not yet know of his Christianity, honored him with the rank of comes[8] and voivode. George's mother had by then already died.

When Diocletian resolved to exterminate the Christians by torture, the holy George was in the emperor's service. From the first day, as soon as the holy George became convinced that this unrighteous design could in no way be revoked, and learned of the savagery of the impious against the Christians, he resolved that the time had come which would serve for the salvation of his soul. At once the holy George gave away all his wealth, his gold, silver and precious garments, to the poor; he granted freedom to the slaves who were with him, and concerning the slaves who were on his estates in Palestine, he arranged that some of them be freed and others be given to the needy. On the third day, when the final council of the emperor and his princes was to be held concerning the lawless slaying of innocent Christians, the courageous soldier of Christ, the holy George, rejecting all human fear and having within himself only the fear of God, with a bright countenance and a bold mind appeared at that impious and lawless assembly and addressed it with this speech:

"O emperor, and you, princes and counselors! You have been appointed to uphold good laws and righteous judgments, yet you furiously raise your wrath against the Christians, establishing lawlessness and issuing unjust decrees for the judgment of innocent people who have wronged no one. You persecute and torture them, compelling to your

7. A tribune is a commander of an army.

8. A comes was among the ancient Romans a senior military commander who accompanied the emperor on his journeys. Since the comites formed the emperor's retinue and at the same time were his counselors, this office was considered very honorable.

mad impiety even those who have learned to be pious. But no, your idols are not gods! Do not be deceived by this lie. Jesus Christ is the one God; there is one Lord in the glory of God the Father, by whom all things were made and by whose Holy Spirit all things exist. Either come to know the truth yourselves and learn piety, or do not trouble with your madness those who have come to know true piety."

Astonished at such words of the holy George and at his unexpected boldness, all turned their eyes upon the emperor, waiting impatiently for him to answer the saint. But the emperor, from amazement, could not collect himself, and as though stunned by thunder, sat in silence, restraining his anger. At last the emperor signaled with a gesture to his friend Magnentius, who was present at the council with the rank of anphipates, that he should answer George.

Magnentius called the saint to him and said:

"Who has moved you to such boldness and such eloquence?"

"The truth," the saint answered.

"What then is this truth?" said Magnentius. George said:

"The truth is Christ Himself, whom you persecute."

"So you too are a Christian?" asked Magnentius.

And the holy George answered:

"I am a servant of Christ, my God, and, trusting in Him, I have of my own will come before you to bear witness to the truth."

At these words of the saint the whole assembly was stirred; everyone spoke, one one thing, another another, and there arose a disorderly clamor and outcry, as happens in a large crowd of people.

Then Diocletian ordered silence to be restored, and, turning his eyes upon the saint, recognized him and said:

"I have marveled before at your nobility, O George! Recognizing your appearance and your courage as worthy of honor, I bestowed upon you no small rank. And today, when you speak bold words to your own harm, I, out of love for your mind and bravery, give you counsel as a father and exhort you, that you not lose your military glory and the honor of your rank, and that by your obstinacy you not surrender the flower of your youth to torments. Offer sacrifice to the gods, and you will receive from us still greater honor."

The holy George answered:

"O, if only you yourself, O emperor, through me would come to know the true God and offer to Him the sacrifice of praise that He loves! He would grant you a better kingdom, the immortal one, for the kingdom which you now enjoy is unstable, vain, and quickly perishes, and together with it its brief pleasures also perish. Those who are deluded by them receive no benefit at all. Nothing of this can weaken my piety, and no torments will frighten my soul or shake my mind."

These words of the holy George drove the emperor to frenzy. Not letting the saint finish his speech, the emperor commanded his spearmen to drive George out of the assembly with their spears and to imprison him.

When the soldiers began to carry out the emperor's order, and a single spear had already touched the body of the saint, at once its iron became soft like tin and bent. And the martyr's lips were filled with praise of God.

Having brought the martyr into the prison, the soldiers stretched him out on the ground, face upward, locked his feet in stocks, and laid a heavy stone upon his breast. So the tyrant had ordered. The saint endured all this and unceasingly gave thanks to God until the following day.

When the day came, the emperor again summoned the martyr for examination, and seeing George oppressed by the weight of the stone, he asked him:

"Have you repented, George, or are you still persisting in your obstinacy?"

The holy George, oppressed by the heavy stone that lay on his breast, could barely say:

"O emperor, do you think that I have come to such weakness that after so small a torment I shall renounce my faith? Rather you will grow weary from tormenting me than I from being tormented by you."

Then Diocletian ordered a great wheel to be brought, beneath which were placed boards studded with iron points resembling swords, knives and spokes; some of them were straight, others bent like fishing rods. On that wheel the emperor had the naked martyr bound, and, turning

the wheel, had his whole body cut by the iron points fixed to the boards. The holy George, cut into pieces and crushed like a reed, bore his torments valiantly. At first he prayed to God with a loud voice, then quietly, to himself, he gave thanks to God, uttering not a single groan, but remaining as one asleep or insensible.

Deeming the saint dead, the emperor in joy offered praise to his gods and addressed George with these words:

"Where is your God, George; why has He not delivered you from such torment?"

Then he ordered George, as one already dead, to be untied from the wheel, and himself went to the temple of Apollo.

Suddenly the air grew dark and a terrible thunder rolled, and many heard a voice from on high:

"Fear not, George, I am with you."

A great and unusual radiance appeared, and the Angel of the Lord, in the form of a beautiful youth with a bright countenance, illumined with light, was seen standing by the wheel; laying his hand upon the martyr, he said:

"Rejoice!"

And no one dared approach the wheel or the martyr while the vision lasted. When the Angel disappeared, the martyr himself came down from the wheel, released from it by the Angel and healed of his wounds by him. St. George stood unharmed in body and called upon the Lord.

At the sight of this miracle the soldiers were struck with great terror and bewilderment, and they reported what had happened to the emperor, who was then present in the pagan temple at the performance of the impious service to the idols. St. George followed the soldiers and presented himself to the emperor in the temple.

At first the emperor did not believe that it was St. George before him, but thought it was someone resembling him. Those surrounding the emperor looked intently at George and were convinced that it was indeed he; and the martyr himself declared in a loud voice:

"I am George."

Terror and bewilderment long held everyone's tongue. Two men who were there, Anatolius and Protoleon, who held the honorable rank

of praetor[9], and who had previously been instructed in the Christian faith, seeing this wondrous miracle, were wholly confirmed in the confession of Christ and cried out:

"One is the great and true God, the Christian God!"

The emperor at once ordered them seized, led out of the city without interrogation, and put to death by the sword.

Queen Alexandra, also present in the temple, seeing the miraculous healing of the martyr and hearing of the appearance of the Angel, came to know the truth. But when she wished to confess Christ boldly, the eparch restrained her, and before the emperor learned of it, ordered her led away to the palace.

The wicked Diocletian, incapable of doing good, ordered George cast into a pit lined with stone and filled with quicklime, and the martyr covered with it for three days.

Being led to the pit, the saint prayed to the Lord with such a loud voice:

"Savior of the sorrowing, refuge of the persecuted, hope of the hopeless, O Lord my God! Hear the prayer of Thy servant, look upon me and have mercy on me. Deliver me from the wiles of the adversary and grant me to keep the confession of Thy holy Name to the end of my life. Forsake me not, O Master, for my sins, lest my enemies say: 'Where is his God?' Show forth Thy power and glorify Thy name in me, Thy unworthy servant. Send me an Angel to guard me, unworthy as I am, Thou who didst turn the Babylonian furnace into dew and preserve Thy youths unharmed (Dan. 3), for Thou art blessed unto ages. Amen.

Having so prayed and made the sign of the Cross over his whole body, George entered the pit, rejoicing and glorifying God. Having bound the martyr and, according to the command, covered him with quicklime in the pit, the emperor's servants departed.

On the third day the emperor ordered the martyr's bones taken out of the pit of lime, for he thought George had burned there. When the servants came and cleared away the lime, they found the saint, contrary

9. A praetor was a city judge.

to expectation, unharmed, alive, healthy, and freed from his bonds. He stood with a bright countenance, stretched his hands toward heaven, and gave thanks to God for all His benefits.

The servants and the people present at this were struck with terror and wonder, and as with one voice glorified the God of George, calling Him Great.

Learning of what had happened, Diocletian at once ordered the saint brought before him and said with astonishment:

"Whence comes such strength in you, George, and by what sorceries do you work? Tell us. I think you pretended to believe in Christ on purpose, to display a magical cunning, to astonish everyone with your sorcery and to show yourself great through it."

"O Emperor," the saint answered, "I supposed that you would not be able to open your mouth to blaspheme the almighty God, for Whom all things are possible and Who delivers from calamities those who hope in Him. But you, being beguiled by the devil, have fallen into such a depth of error and perdition that you call the miracles of my God sorcery and enchantment, though they are visible to your eyes. I lament your blindness, I call you wretched, and I consider you unworthy of my answer."

Then Diocletian ordered iron boots brought, long nails heated and driven into their soles, the martyr shod in these boots, and he was thus driven with blows to the prison. As the martyr was driven, shod in this manner, the tormentor mocked him, saying:

"What a swift runner you are, George, how quickly you go!"

The martyr, cruelly dragged along and subjected to harsh blows, said within himself:

"Go on, George, that you may attain, for you are going 'not to some uncertain thing' (cf. 1 Cor. 9:26 in the Slavonic, that is, to eternal salvation)."

Then, calling upon God, he said:

"Look down from heaven, O Lord, behold my labor and hear the groaning of Thy bound servant, for my enemies have multiplied and 'with cruel hatred they hate me' (Ps. 24:19). But Thou Thyself heal me, O Master, for my bones are crushed, and grant me endurance to the end, lest my enemy say: I have prevailed against him."

With such prayer St. George went to the prison. Confined there, he grew weak in body, his feet being torn, but he did not grow weak in spirit. All day and all night he did not cease offering thanks and prayers to God. And that night, by God's help, he was healed of his sores; his feet and his whole body became unharmed again.

In the morning St. George was presented to the emperor at the place of spectacle, where the emperor was with the whole senate. Seeing that the martyr walked upright and did not limp, as though no sores had been inflicted upon him, the emperor said to him in amazement:

"Well, George, do you like your boots?"

"Very much," the saint answered.

And the emperor said:

"Cease to be bold; be gentle and submissive, and, rejecting your magical cunning, offer sacrifice to the gracious gods, lest you be deprived of this sweet life through many torments."

St. George answered:

"How mad you are, who call the power of God sorcery and shamelessly boast of demonic delusion!"

Looking upon the saint with angry eyes, Diocletian interrupted his speech with a savage cry and ordered those standing by to strike him on the mouth; let him learn, said the tormentor, not to vex kings. Then he ordered George beaten with oxen sinews until his flesh and blood clung to the ground.

Though cruelly tortured, St. George did not change the brightness of his countenance. Greatly astonished at this, the emperor said to those around him:

"Truly this is not from the courage and strength of George, but from magical cunning."

Then Magnentius said to the emperor:

"There is here a certain man skilled in sorcery. If you command him to be brought, George will soon be overcome and will come to submit to you."

The sorcerer was at once summoned before the emperor, and Diocletian said to him:

"What this wicked man George has done here, the eyes of all present have seen; but how he did it, only you who are skilled in that cunning know. Either overcome and destroy his sorcery and make him submissive to us, or at once deprive him of life with magical herbs, so that he may receive the death proper to him from the very cunning he has learned. For this reason I have kept him alive until now."

The sorcerer, named Athanasius, promised to carry out everything commanded on the following day.

Having ordered the martyr guarded in the prison, the emperor left the tribunal, and the saint entered the prison, calling upon God:

"Show, O Lord, Thy mercy upon me, direct my steps to Thy confession, and keep my way in Thy faith, that Thy most holy Name may be glorified everywhere."

In the morning the emperor again appeared at the tribunal and sat in a high place in the sight of all. Athanasius the sorcerer came too, proud of his wisdom, carrying magical potions in various vessels to display before the emperor and all present. And Athanasius said:

"Let the condemned man be brought here now, and he shall see the power of our gods and my enchantments."

Then, taking one vessel, Athanasius said to the emperor:

"If you wish that madman to obey you in everything, let him drink this potion."

Taking another vessel, the sorcerer went on:

"And if it pleases your judgment to see the bitter death of that man, let him drink this."

At once, by the emperor's command, St. George was brought to judgment. Diocletian said to him:

"Now your sorceries, George, shall be undone and brought to an end."

And he ordered the saint forcibly given the magical drink. Drinking it without hesitation, George remained unharmed, rejoicing and mocking the demonic delusion. Seething with rage, the emperor ordered him forced to drink another potion, filled with deadly poison. But the saint did not wait to be compelled; he himself voluntarily took the vessel and

drank the deadly poison, yet remained unharmed, being preserved from death by the help of the grace of God.

The emperor and his whole senate were astonished; Athanasius the sorcerer also fell into perplexity. After a time the emperor said to the martyr:

"How long, George, will you astonish us with your deeds, until you tell us the truth, by what magical wiles you have come to scorn the torments inflicted upon you and remain unharmed from the deadly potion? Tell us everything truthfully, we who wish to hear you with gentleness."

The blessed George answered:

"Do not think, O Emperor, that I pay no heed to the torments, relying on human contrivance. No, I am saved by calling upon Christ and by His power. Trusting in Him, by His mysterious teaching we count the torments as nothing."

And Diocletian said:

"In what does the mysterious teaching of your Christ consist?"

George answered:

– He knows that your malice will accomplish nothing, and He has taught His servants not to fear those who kill the body, since they cannot kill the soul. For He said: "But not a hair of your head shall perish" (Lk. 21:18); "they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them" (Mk. 16:18); "He who believes in Me, the works that I do he shall do also" (Jn. 14:12). Hear, O Emperor, this His unfailing promise to us, of which I speak to you briefly.

– What, then, are these works of His of which you speak? – asked Diocletian.

The saint answered:

– To give sight to the blind, to cleanse the lepers, to make the lame walk, to give hearing to the deaf, to cast out unclean spirits, to raise the dead – these are the works of Christ, and such as these.

Turning to Athanasius the sorcerer, the emperor asked him:

– What do you say to this?

– I am amazed, – answered Athanasius, – that he insults your clemency, speaking falsehood in the hope of escaping your sovereign hand.

We, who daily enjoy the many benefits of our immortal gods, have never yet seen them raise a dead man. But he, trusting in a dead man and believing in a crucified God, shamelessly says that He performed great works. Since George has confessed before us all that his God is the accomplisher of such miracles, and that those who believe in Him have received from Him the unfailing promise that they too shall do such works as He did, let George raise the dead man before you, O Emperor, and before us all. Then we too will submit to his God as almighty. Here, from afar, the tomb is visible in which a dead man was recently laid, whom I knew in life. If George raises him, he will truly have conquered us.

The emperor was astonished at Athanasius's counsel. The tomb he pointed to lay at a distance of half a stadion[10] from the place of judgment. For the trial was taking place on the site of a former theatre, at the city gates. That tomb, however, was outside the city, since according to the custom of the pagans their dead were buried outside the city. The emperor then commanded the martyr to raise the dead man, that he might show the power of his God. Magnentius, the anthypatos, however, besought the emperor to release George from his fetters. When the fetters had been removed from George, Magnentius said to him:

– Show us, George, the wondrous works of your God, and you will bring us all to faith in Him.

And the saint said to him:

– My God, who created all things out of nothing, has the power to raise that dead man through me; but you, who have darkened your minds, cannot understand the truth. Yet my Lord, for the sake of the people who are present, will do what you ask of me in testing me, so that you will not ascribe it to sorcery. True are the words of the sorcerer you have brought, that neither sorcery nor the power of your gods has ever been able to raise the dead. But I, before the face of all who stand around and with a loud voice, will call upon my God.

10. A stadion was a measure of length; it equaled approximately 88 of our sazhens.

Having said this, George bent his knees and prayed to God for a long time with tears; then, rising, George cried out to the Lord with a loud voice:

– Eternal God, merciful God, God of all powers, Almighty, do not put to shame those who trust in Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ; hear me, Thy humble servant, at this hour, Thou who didst hear Thy holy Apostles in every place, in all wonders and signs. Give this wicked generation the sign it asks, and raise the dead man lying in the grave, to the shame of those who deny Thee, to the glory of Thee, Thy Father, and the Most Holy Spirit. O Master, show those present that Thou art the one God for all the earth, that they may know Thee, the almighty Lord, to whom all things submit, and whose glory is forever. Amen.

When he said "Amen," suddenly thunder roared and the earth shook, so that all were terrified. Then the roof of the tomb fell to the ground, the coffin was opened, and the dead man stood up alive and came out of the coffin. All who saw this grew pale with terror. Immediately the report of what had happened spread among the people, and many wept and glorified Christ as the great God. The emperor and all who were with him, filled with both fear and unbelief, at first said that George, being a great sorcerer, had raised from the grave not a dead man but some spirit and phantom, in order to deceive those who saw it. Then, convinced that before them was not a phantom but really a man raised from the dead and invoking the name of Christ, the emperor and the nobles fell into great perplexity and amazement, and silently surrounded George, not at all knowing what to do. Athanasius fell at the feet of the saint, confessing that Christ is the Almighty God, and begging the martyr to forgive him the sins he had committed in ignorance. After a long time Diocletian at last commanded the people to be silent and said:

– Do you see the deception, O men; do you see the malice and cunning of these sorcerers? The most impious Athanasius, aiding a sorcerer like himself, gave George not poison but some enchanted drink which would help him deceive us. They gave the appearance of death to a living man, and by sorcery they raised him before our eyes as though he had risen from the dead.

Having said this, the emperor commanded that the heads of Athanasius and of the one raised from the dead be struck off without interrogation or preliminary torments; the holy martyr of Christ, George, he ordered to be kept in prison and in chains until he himself should be free of the affairs of public government and should devise how to deal with the martyr. The emperor withdrew to his palace, and the holy George was led off to prison, where he rejoiced and gave thanks to God:

– Glory to Thee, O Master, who puttest not to shame those who trust in Thee. I thank Thee that Thou helpest me everywhere and every day showest me greater benefits, and adornest me, unworthy as I am, with Thy grace. Vouchsafe me, O God, my God, soon to behold Thy glory, having put the devil to shame to the end.

While the great martyr George was in prison, people came to him who had believed in Christ through his miracles; they gave gold to the guards, fell at the feet of the saint, and were instructed by him in the holy faith. By invoking the name of Christ and by the sign of the Cross, the saint healed the sick who came in great numbers to him in prison. Among those who came was a certain man named Glycerius, a simple plowman, whose ox had fallen from a mountain into the forest and been killed. Hearing of the saint's miracles, Glycerius went to him, grieving over the dead ox. The saint smiled and said to him:

– Go, brother, and do not be sad. Christ, my God, will restore your ox to life.

The plowman went away with firm faith in the martyr's words and indeed saw his ox alive. Immediately he returned to George, and walking through the middle of the city, cried out loudly:

– Truly great is the Christian God!

For this the soldiers seized him and reported him to the emperor. Diocletian was filled with anger, would not see him, and commanded that his head be struck off at once outside the city. Glycerius went to death for Christ with joy, as to a feast, walking ahead of the soldiers, crying out with a loud voice to Christ God and praying that He would accept the outpouring of his blood as a baptism. Thus Glycerius died.

Then certain men belonging to the senate reported to the emperor that George, while in prison, was stirring up the people, turning many away from the gods to the Crucified One, and working miracles by sorcery so that everyone went to him. They advised that George be subjected again to torture, and that, if he did not repent and turn to the gods, he be at once condemned to death. Summoning the anthypatos Magnentius, the emperor commanded that a tribunal be prepared the next morning at the temple of Apollo, so that the martyr might be tested before the eyes of the people. On the night when the holy George was praying in prison, falling asleep he saw in a dream the Lord appear, who lifted him up by the hand, embraced and kissed him, and placed a crown upon his head, saying:

– Do not fear, but be bold, and you shall be counted worthy to reign with Me. Do not faint; you will soon come to Me and receive what has been prepared for you.

Awaking from the dream, the saint joyfully gave thanks to the Lord, and calling the prison guard, said to him:

– I beg you, brother, for one kindness; command that my servant be admitted here. I have something to say to him.

The guard called the servant, who constantly stood by the prison and carefully recorded the deeds and words of the saint. Entering, the servant bowed to the ground before his master, who sat in chains, and fell at his feet, bathed in tears. The saint raised him from the ground, bade him take courage, and told him of his vision, saying:

– My child! Soon the Lord will call me to Himself; and after my departure from this life, take my humble body and, according to the will which I wrote before my contest, carry it with God's help to our house in Palestine, and fulfill everything according to my testament, having the fear of God and firm faith in Christ.

The servant with tears promised to fulfill what was commanded. The saint embraced him lovingly, gave him the last kiss, and dismissed him in peace.

In the morning, as soon as the sun rose, the emperor took his seat at the tribunal and, restraining his anger, began to speak gently with George, who was brought before him:

– Do you not think, O George, that I am full of humanity and mercy toward you, bearing with kindness your crimes? My gods are witnesses that I spare your youth for the sake of your flourishing beauty, intelligence and courage. And I would wish to have you as co-ruler, second in honor in my realm, if only you would be willing to turn to the gods. Tell us, then, what do you think of this?

Saint George said:

– O emperor, you should first have shown such mercy to me, and not tormented me with such cruel torments.

Hearing this speech of the martyr with pleasure, the emperor said:

"If you will with love obey me as a father, for all the torments you have endured I will reward you with many honours."

George answered:

"If it please you, O Emperor, let us go inside the temple, that we may see the gods whom you worship."

The emperor rose gladly and went with all the senate and the people into the temple of Apollo, leading St. George with honour. The people greeted the emperor with shouts, extolling the might and the victory of their gods.

On entering the temple, where the sacrifice had been prepared, all gazed upon the Martyr in silence, no doubt expecting that he would offer sacrifice to the gods. The Saint, however, approached the idol of Apollo, stretched forth his hand toward it, and addressed the mad idol as though it were alive:

"Do you wish to receive sacrifice from me as a god?"

At these words the Saint made the sign of the Cross. The demon that dwelt in the idol cried out:

"I am not a god, not a god, nor is any one like me. There is one God, the One whom you confess. We are apostates from among the angels who served Him; we, possessed by envy, beguile men."

Then the Saint said to the demon:

"How then dare you dwell here, when I, the servant of the true God, have come hither?"

At these words of the Saint a tumult and wailing rose from the idols. Then they fell to the ground and were shattered. Immediately the

priests and many of the people, like frenzied men, furiously rushed upon the Saint, beat him, bound him, and cried out to the King:

"Kill this sorcerer, O King, kill him before he destroys us."

The report of this tumult and outcry spread through the whole city and reached the ears of Queen Alexandra. Until now she had kept her faith in Christ hidden within herself; but now she no longer had the strength to conceal her confession, and she went at once to the place where the holy Great Martyr George was.

Seeing the popular tumult, and catching sight from afar of the Martyr, whom they held bound, the Queen tried in vain to make her way through the crowd to him, and began to cry out loudly:

"God of George, help me, for Thou alone art almighty."

When the outcry of the people subsided, Diocletian ordered the Martyr to be brought before him, and, becoming like a madman in his fury, he said to the Saint:

"Such is the gratitude you repay, vile wretch, for my clemency; in such a manner are you accustomed to offer sacrifice to the gods."

St. George answered him:

"Yes, I am accustomed to honour your gods in such a way. O mad emperor, be ashamed to ascribe your salvation to gods who cannot help themselves, nor can endure the presence of the servants of Christ."

While the Saint was speaking these words, the Queen at last made her way through the crowd into the midst of them, and boldly confessed before all that Christ is the true God. She fell at the feet of the Martyr, and, mocking the madness of the tormentor, reproached the gods and cursed those who worshipped them. Seeing his wife, who at the feet of the Martyr so boldly glorified Christ and held the idols in contempt, the emperor was greatly amazed and said to her:

"What has befallen you, Alexandra, that you join this sorcerer and magician, and so shamelessly renounce the gods?"

But she turned away and made no answer to the emperor. Diocletian was filled with still greater rage, and no longer put George or the Queen to the question, but at once pronounced sentence of death upon them both:

"The most wicked George, who has declared himself a follower of the Galilean[11], and has greatly reviled me and the gods, together with Queen Alexandra, who has been corrupted by his sorcery and, like him, has madly reproached the gods, I command to be beheaded with the sword."

The soldiers seized the Martyr, bound in chains, and led him outside the city. They also led away the most noble Queen, who followed George without resistance, praying inwardly and often gazing toward heaven. On the way the Queen grew faint and asked permission to sit down. Having sat down, she leaned her head against a wall and gave up her spirit to the Lord. Seeing this, the Martyr of Christ George glorified God and went on, praying to the Lord that his own course might also end worthily. When George came near the place appointed for his execution, he uttered a prayer in a loud voice:

"Blessed art Thou, O Lord my God, for Thou hast not delivered me as a prey to those who seek me, nor hast Thou made my enemies rejoice, and Thou hast delivered my soul as a bird from the snare. Hear me now also, O Lord, stand by Thy servant in this last hour, and deliver my soul from the snares of the prince of the air and from his unclean spirits. Impute not as sin the ignorance of those who have sinned against me, but grant them forgiveness and love, that they too, having known Thee, may partake of Thy Kingdom with Thy chosen ones. Receive also my soul with those who have been pleasing to Thee from of old, passing over my sins committed knowingly and unknowingly. Remember, O Lord, those who call upon Thy glorious name, for Thou art blessed and glorified unto ages of ages. Amen."

Having prayed, the holy George joyfully bowed his head beneath the sword, and so he died on the twenty-third day of the month of April, having worthily completed his confession and kept his faith undefiled. Therefore he was crowned with the chosen crown of righteousness[12].

Such was the triumph of the great deeds of the brave warrior, such his campaign against the enemies and his glorious victory; thus, by his

11. That is, Jesus Christ.

struggles, he was made worthy of the incorruptible and everlasting crown. By his prayers may we also be made worthy of the portion of the righteous and of standing at the right hand in the day of the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom belong all glory, honour, and worship, unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Miracles of the Holy Great Martyr George

In the lands of Syria there was a city called Ramla, in which a stone church was being built in the name of the holy Great Martyr George. But at that place there were no suitable stones from which great stone pillars could be made to support the church building. Such pillars were usually bought in distant countries and brought by sea. Many of the God-loving citizens of Ramla set out for various countries to buy stone pillars for the church being built. With the same purpose a certain pious widow, who had zeal and faith toward the holy Great Martyr George, went out, wishing to buy from her small means one pillar for the church of George. Having bought a fine pillar in a certain country, she brought it to the seashore, where the governor of Ramla, who had acquired several pillars, was loading them onto a ship. The woman began to beg the official to take her pillar too on his ship and convey it to the church of the Martyr. The rich man did not heed her request; he did not take her pillar, but sailed away, loading his ship only with his own pillars. Then the woman fell to the ground in sorrow and, with tears, called upon the Great Martyr for help, that he might somehow arrange the delivery of her pillar to Ramla for his church. In grief and tears she fell asleep, and in a dream vision there appeared to her the holy Great Martyr George, on horseback, in the form of a voivode. He raised her from the ground and said:

"O woman, tell me, what is the matter?"

She told the Saint the cause of her sorrow. He dismounted and asked her:

"Where do you wish to set the pillar?"

12. The death of the holy Great Martyr George took place in 304 A.D. In the 4th century, a church was built in Rome in honor of Saint George, in which part of his relics, his spear, and his banner are preserved.

She answered:

"On the right side of the church."

At once the Saint traced with his finger on the pillar the following:

"Let this pillar of the widow be set second in the row of pillars on the right side of the church."

Having written this, George said to the woman:

"Help me yourself."

And so, when they took hold of the pillar, the stone became light, and they cast the pillar into the sea. This is what the woman saw in her dream.

Waking, she did not find the pillar in its place, and, placing her hope in God and in His servant, the holy George, she set out for home. But before she arrived there, and before the ship had sailed in, on the day after her vision her pillar was found lying on the shore of the Ramla harbour. When the governor, named Basil, brought his pillars on the ship and went ashore, he saw the widow's pillar and the inscription on it, traced by the Saint's finger. That man was astonished, and, understanding the miracle of the holy Great Martyr, he recognized his own sin and repented of having disdained the widow's request. With many prayers he begged George for forgiveness and received it from the Saint, who appeared to him in a vision. The widow's pillar was set in the place indicated by the inscription upon it, in memory of the pious woman and to the wonder of the miracle wrought by the Holy Great Martyr, and to the glory of Christ our God, the Source of miracles.

Many years later, when Syria was conquered by the Saracens, in the city of Ramla, in the church of the holy Great Martyr George, the following miracle took place:

A certain noble Saracen, accompanied by others of his kinsmen, entered the church during the service, and, seeing the icon of St. George, and also the priest standing before the icon, venerating it and offering prayers to the Saint, said to his friends in the Saracen tongue:

"Do you see what this madman is doing? He is praying to a board. Bring me a bow and an arrow, and I will shoot through this board."

At once a bow was brought, and the Saracen, standing behind them all, drew the bow and shot an arrow at the icon of the Great Martyr.

But the arrow did not fly toward the icon; it rose upward and, falling down, pierced the hand of that Saracen, wounding him severely. Immediately the Saracen went home, feeling sharp pain in his hand. The pain grew more and more; the Saracen's hand swelled and became puffed up like a bellows, so that he groaned from the intense suffering.

In this Saracen's house there were several Christian slave-women. Summoning them, he said to them:

"I was in the church of your God George and wished to shoot through his icon. But I released the arrow from the bow so unsuccessfully that, falling downward, the arrow wounded me severely in the hand, and now I am dying from unbearable pain."

Those slave-women said to him:

What do you think: did you do well in daring to inflict such an insult upon the icon of the holy martyr?

The Saracen answered them:

"Did this icon have the power to make me ill now?"

The slave-women answered him:

"We are not learned in books, and therefore we do not know what to answer you. But call our priest, and he will tell you about what you are asking."

The Saracen obeyed the counsel of his slave-women, and, summoning the priest, said to him:

"I wish to know what power that board, or icon, which you venerated has."

The priest answered him:

"I did not venerate a board, but my God, the Creator of the universe. I prayed to the holy Great Martyr George, depicted upon the board, that he might be my intercessor before God."

The Saracen asked him:

"Who then is George, if not your god?"

The priest answered:

"Saint George is not our god, but only a servant of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was a man like us in all things. He endured many tortures from the pagans, who compelled him to renounce Christ; but, standing manfully against them and becoming a confessor for the

name of Christ, he received from God the gift of working signs and miracles. We Christians, honoring him, also respect his icon, and, looking upon it as upon the saint himself, we venerate it and kiss it. You yourself do the same: when your dear parents or your brothers die, you look upon their garments, weep before them, and kiss them, imagining in those garments as it were the very people who have died. Just so we honor the icons of the saints, not as gods (God forbid!), but as images of the servants of God who work miracles also through their icons. You yourself, who dared to shoot an arrow at the icon of the holy martyr, have had occasion to learn his power, for the instruction and edification of others."

Having heard this, the Saracen said:

"What then must I do now? You see that my hand is greatly swollen; I suffer unbearably and am drawing near to death."

The priest said to him:

"If you wish to remain alive and recover, then order the icon of the holy Great Martyr George to be brought to you, place it above your bed, set a lamp with oil before the icon, and kindle a light in it for the whole night; and in the morning anoint your sick hand with oil from the lamp, firmly believing that you will be healed, and you will be well."

The Saracen at once asked the priest to bring him the icon of George, and, receiving it with joy, he did as the priest had taught him. In the morning he anointed his hand with oil from the lamp, and at once the pain in his hand ceased, and his hand became healthy.

Astonished and struck by so great a miracle, that Saracen asked the priest whether anything was written in his books about Saint George.

The priest brought him the account of the life and sufferings of the saint and began to read it to the Saracen. The Saracen, listening attentively to the reading, all the while held the icon of the martyr in his hands, and, turning to the saint depicted on the icon as to a living man, cried out with tears:

"O holy George! You were young but wise, I am old but foolish! You pleased God in your early years, and I have lived to old age and still do not know the true God! Pray to your God for me, that He may deem me also worthy to be His servant!"

Then, falling at the feet of the priest, the Saracen began to beg him to make him worthy of holy Baptism.

At first the priest did not agree to this, for he feared the Saracens. But seeing his faith, and being unable to resist his entreaties, he baptized him at night, secretly from the Saracens.

When morning came, the newly baptized Saracen went out of his house and, standing in the middle of the city before everyone, began with great zeal to preach Christ aloud, the true God, while he cursed the Saracen faith. At once a multitude of Saracens surrounded him; filled with anger and fury, they rushed upon him like wild beasts and hacked him into small pieces with their swords.

Thus that Saracen, in so short a time, accomplished the good ascetic deed of confessing Christ, and received the crown of martyrdom through the prayers of the holy Great Martyr George.

On the island of Mitylene[13] there was a church, great and glorious, built in honor of the holy Great Martyr George. The inhabitants of this island had a pious custom: on the day of the holy martyr's memory they gathered in this church for the common solemn honoring of Saint George. The Agarenes[14] living on the island of Crete[15] learned of this, and one evening they attacked that place. Those Christians who were outside the church escaped by flight from the hands of the Agarenes; but those who were in the church were seized by the Agarenes and led into captivity. Among these last there was taken captive also one Christian youth, who was carried off to the island of Crete and taken by the commander of the Agarenes into his service.

The parents of this youth, although they had lost their son, did not abandon their pious custom: when the annual feast of the holy martyr's

13. The island of Mytilene was located in the northern part of the Mediterranean Sea.

14. Agarenes is the same as Saracens. The name Agarenes was originally applied to a nomadic tribe of Arabian Bedouins who, according to tradition, descended from Hagar, the slave of Abraham. Later, however, this name was extended by Christian writers to all Arabs in general, and also to Muslims.

15. Crete is one of the large islands of the Mediterranean Sea; it lies in the eastern part of the Mediterranean, south of Greece. 1000 years B.C., settlers from Greece came here. In the 70s A.D., Crete fell under Roman rule. Beginning in 650 A.D., Crete suffered greatly from raids by the Saracens, who seized the island in 823. At present, Crete is under the provisional administration of the Greek royal house (under the supervision of the European powers).

memory came, they went to the church to offer a prayer of supplication to the holy martyr, and afterward they held at their home a feast in honor and memory of Saint George. When the guests had already begun to gather for the feast, the mother of the captive youth, going into the church (which was not far from her house), fell on her knees there with tears and fervently prayed the saint to deliver her son from captivity by such means as were known to the saint himself. Her fervent prayer was heard. When she had finished her prayer and returned to the guests at the feast, at the moment when her husband, having invoked the holy Great Martyr in prayer and praised him as helper and protector, was already about to honor the guests, and the cupbearers were already standing ready, suddenly at that very moment the youth was taken by Saint George from the place of his captivity and brought to the house of his parents; and the youth held in his hand a vessel of wine, which he offered to his mother. It turned out that at that moment the youth, who was in Crete serving the commander of the Agarenes while he was eating, had already prepared to pour him wine when suddenly, like the ancient Habakkuk, he was caught up into the air and carried to the island of Mitylene with the vessel filled with wine. All who sat at the table, seeing the youth, were greatly astonished, and in one voice asked him:

"Where have you been, whence have you come, and how did you come to be here?"

He answered them:

"I had filled this vessel with wine to offer it to my commander. But at that moment I was suddenly seized by some glorious man sitting on a horse, who also set me on the horse. With one hand I held to the belt of that man, and in the other I held this vessel of wine, and then I found myself here, as you see yourselves."

Hearing this, all were amazed at so glorious a miracle, and, rising from the table, gave thanks to God and to His saint, the holy Great Martyr George.

A story like this miracle was also told by the monk Cosmas:

"In the reign of the Greek emperor Basil[16] (I was then still a youth), my commander, the voivode whom I served, was sent by the emperor to the island of Cyprus[17]. When we came there, we heard an account of a miracle wrought by the holy Great Martyr George in the church built to the glory and honor of his name on the day of his feast, namely: the son of the priest who served in that church had been taken captive by the Saracens, and now, on the day of the memory of Saint George, he was found near his father during the celebration of the Liturgy. The voivode, summoning the said priest and his son, asked the latter:

"How did you escape from the Saracens?"

That youth then told the following about himself:

"It was pleasing to God that Saint George should deliver me. I myself do not know how I came here; I know only that I was already in my third year of captivity. My father once sent me on a ship with several companions to make some purchases. But the Saracens attacked us, took us all captive, and led me to Palestine (at that time Jerusalem and all of Palestine were already in the hands of the Saracens). Here I served," the youth related, "my master for three years; and now it is already the eighteenth day since my master ordered me to carry his bed to the bath, intending to bathe here. When he had bathed, he said to me:

"Did you not bring me a drink, that I might drink it?"

I said to him (the youth relates):

"No, I did not bring it, my master."

He was already about to strike me, but I, escaping his hands, went to the house of my mistress and, taking from her a vessel with that drink, was returning to the bath, to my master. The road by which I went passed a Christian church, in which at that time the Divine Liturgy was being celebrated. I heard the kontakion which they were singing to Saint George: 'Thou wast shown to be a cultivated field of God.' The singing moved me to tears, and I said from the depth of my heart:

"Holy Great Martyr George! Have not the sighs of my father reached God and you? Will you despise his tears, which he sheds in the

church dedicated to your name, beseeching you for me, that you would save me from this captivity and deliver me from this slavery?"

Having said this, I went to the bath. My master, seeing tears in my eyes, began to scold me and said to me in anger:

"Pour me out this drink."

I poured the drink into the vessel. Then the master said to me:

"Add a little more."

When I took the vessel to pour the drink from it, it seemed to me that I was beginning to see my master poorly. I cried out:

"Master, I cannot see!"

At that moment some force lifted me from the ground, and so I no longer heard what my lord was saying to me, but I heard the singing of these words: "One is Holy, One is the Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen." Immediately I saw myself in the sanctuary, and I saw also my father, holding in his hands the holy chalice and saying to the church servers:

"Give me the drink."

Standing beside my father, I wanted to pour the drink that was in my hands into the holy chalice, for at the very moment when I was in the bath standing beside the Saracen, holding in my hand the vessel with the drink, at that same moment I suddenly found myself in the sanctuary near my father, who was celebrating the Divine Liturgy. My father, looking at me, asked the concelebrants:

"Who is this youth?"

They answered with astonishment:

"We do not know who he is or whence he has come here," for I had been shorn and was wearing Saracen clothing. And I said to my father:

"Father! Do you not recognize me? I am Philotheus, your son."

Then my father said to me:

"And for what purpose is this vessel in your hands, and what is in it?"

I said:

16. Basil I (the Macedonian) reigned from 867 to 886.
17. Cyprus is located in the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea.

"It is a Saracen drink. A moment ago I was with my lord in a bath near Jerusalem, and at the moment when I wanted to give him this drink, I suddenly found myself beside you in this church."

Hearing this, my father was greatly terrified and nearly let the holy chalice fall from his hands. And at that moment I let the vessel with the drink fall from my hands, and, supporting my father's hands, I said to him:

"Do not be troubled, my father, but finish the service."

Then my father, setting the chalice on the Holy Table, raised his hands to heaven and gave thanks to God and His holy servant George. The vessel that I had dropped on the marble floor did not break.

When the service was finished, my father embraced me and kissed me with tears; then we went home.

All our relatives and friends, having heard of everything that had happened to me, gathered at our house, and seeing me, rejoiced and glorified God and His servant, St. George, who had delivered me from the Saracens in the twinkling of an eye.

The voivode and all who were with him, having heard this account from the son of the priest, glorified God and St. George; then, giving great gifts to this youth and his father, they dismissed them with honor.

They also relate another similar miracle of the holy Great Martyr George, as follows.

In Paphlagonia[18], in the city of Amastris, there lived a pious couple, Leontius and Theophana. Both of them had great faith in the holy Great Martyr George, and they often came to the church dedicated to him, which stood not far from them, near a river called Parthenios (from the name of the river the church also bore the name “Parthenie”). This pious couple, out of their love for the saint, adorned this church from their means, regarding this holy martyr as the guardian and provider of all their possessions. Every year these pious Christians honorably and reverently celebrated the memory of the holy martyr, and on that day they gave much alms and prepared a feast for the poor and the

18. A region of Asia Minor.

needy, as well as for their relatives and friends. They had a son named George; constantly keeping the holy martyr in their minds, they also named their son George.

At this time Constantine the 7th[19], son of the Emperor Leo the Wise, reigned over the Greeks. Then war began between the Bulgarians and the Greeks; the Bulgarians, entering into alliance with the Hungarians and the Scythians, approached the Greek regions and laid them waste, taking the inhabitants captive; for this reason the Greeks too had to prepare for war. And since Leontius, a resident of the city of Amastris in Paphlagonia, was a soldier, he too had to go to war against the Bulgarians. But since Leontius was already advanced in years, and his son George was in the years of youth, he decided to send his son to the army in his place. Taking him, Leontius and Theophana first went with him to the aforementioned church, and praying here before the icon of the Great Martyr, they spoke thus:

"To you, holy Great Martyr George, we entrust our only son, whom we, loving you, named after you! Be his leader on the way, his protector in battle, and return him to us alive and well, that we, having received from you a benefit according to our faith, may always glorify with many good deeds your care and concern for us."

Having prayed thus, they sent their son away to the regiments of the Greek army.

Then the war began. At first the Greeks prevailed over the Bulgarians, but afterwards the Bulgarians, gathering their strength, began to conquer the Greeks, by God's permission. A decisive battle took place between the adversaries, and very many of the Greeks fell by the sword of the enemy.

At this time George, son of Leontius, was taken captive by a certain Bulgarian, and by the prayers of St. George he was preserved from death, for the Bulgarian, pitying his youth and the beauty of his face, spared George and led him away into his own land, where George served his master as a slave.

Leontius and Theophana, hearing that the Greek army had been defeated by the Bulgarian army, and seeing that their son did not return

to them, wept and mourned inconsolably, thinking that their son had been killed on the field of battle. Coming to the aforementioned church, they addressed the icon of the holy Great Martyr with these words:

"Was it for this, O Martyr of Christ, that we entrusted our son to you, that he should become food for the birds of heaven and the beasts of the earth? Is this how you hear our daily prayers and our sighing to you? If you have not had mercy on us, who have already come to old age, then at least you should have pitied the flourishing youth of that boy. Why have you disdained our humility, servant of God?"

These and other similar things the elders said with great outcry and many tears, so that all who were in this church could not hold back their tears. Especially the mother of that youth wept unceasingly every day.

The aforementioned victory of the Bulgarians over the Greeks took place in the month of August. When autumn and winter had passed and the month of April came, and the day of the memory of the holy Great Martyr George was drawing near, Leontius and his wife, although they had already despaired of their son's life, thinking that he had perished on the field of battle, did not forget their zeal for the holy martyr and, according to custom, prepared a rich meal for the day of his memory.

When the church services were over, Leontius and Theophana invited many guests to their home: relatives, acquaintances, the poor, the needy. During the meal the guests spoke all the while only of George, son of Leontius and Theophana, who had not returned from the battle. The parents of the youth wept all the while, and the guests tried to console them, especially the mother, who was grieving deeply.

Meanwhile George, being in captivity, performed the duty of cook for his master. On that day, while preparing the food, he remembered the house of his parents, the feast that was being celebrated in their home; he also remembered his relatives, friends, and acquaintances, and in his thoughts he said:

19. Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, son of Leo VI the Wise, reigned from 912 to 969.

"It would be good to know: what is the meal like today in my parents' house? Who has been invited to the dinner? What do they think of me: am I alive, or dead?"

Thinking thus to himself, George wept bitterly.

Meanwhile the time came for his master's meal, and it was necessary for George himself to carry one of the dishes in a pot to his master. George wiped away his tears, and taking the hot pot from the oven, he carried it. Suddenly he felt himself standing in his parents' house in the midst of all the guests. A great miracle! All who were there, seeing George, son of Leontius, with the hot pot, were struck with great terror; his parents thought they were seeing an apparition before them; then, realizing that it was not an apparition but reality, they rushed with great joy to their son, and, falling upon his breast, embraced and kissed him, weeping from such unexpected and great joy. When they began to ask George how he had remained alive, where he had been, and how he had come to be here, he told in detail everything, both of his captivity and of his deliverance from it. Namely, he said the following:

"Just now I was working in the kitchen of my master. I had been ordered to bring this food in the pot to my master. Taking the pot, I set out for my master, but, having gone a few steps up the stairs leading to the room in which my master was dining, I suddenly saw some warrior seated on a horse and shining with an indescribable light; he took me together with this pot and set me here before you, I do not know how."

Hearing this, all who were there, and especially George's parents, offered fervent thanks to God and His holy servant, the Great Martyr George.

When then everyone began to eat of the food from that pot, a new miracle occurred: as much as they ate from the pot, so much was added to it again; although the pot was so small that one man alone could have eaten its contents, and the diners were very many, all ate to satiety, praising God and saying:

"Behold, the holy Great Martyr George has sent us good food from the Bulgarians for his feast!"

Afterwards that pot was carried, together with many gifts and offerings, to the church of the holy Great Martyr and was kept there among the sacred vessels, in memory of the glorious miracle accomplished by the holy Great Martyr George.

The aforementioned church of St. George was very ancient and had already grown very dilapidated, so that it might fall at any moment; but there was no one who would build a new church or renew that old one, for because of the poverty of the inhabitants of that place, the church had been neglected. Once a miracle took place in it.

The children who gathered near this church would play together there, and they reviled and mocked one boy, whom they always defeated in their games. Having lost patience at the constant mockery, that boy turned to the church of St. George and said:

"St. George! Help me also to overcome my opponents, and in gratitude I will bring you a large pie to your church."

And indeed the boy defeated his comrades in the games, not one only but two, and many times besides.

Coming to his mother, the boy told her that he had promised the saint a pie as a gift, and he asked her for it, so that he might fulfil his vow to the saint.

His mother, out of love for her child and also out of reverence for the martyr, prepared a pie according to her son's request and gave it to him still warm, not yet cooled. The boy brought the pie to the church, and, laying it before the sanctuary, bowed down and went away.

It happened that at this time four merchants were passing by that church. They entered the church in order to venerate St. George, and they saw on the floor a tasty pie (it was still not cold, and a fragrant steam rose from it). The merchants said to one another:

"The saint has no need of this. Let us eat the pie, and in its place let us put incense."

When they had eaten the pie, they set off toward the exit of the church, but they could not find the doors, for the doors appeared to them as a wall. Then they laid on the floor one silver coin each, yet still they could not find the way out. Then they laid one gold coin all together and prayed fervently to the saint that he might help them to leave;

but even this time they did not find the way out, being seized as it were with blindness. At last, all four laid down a gold coin each and prayed even more fervently, and then they found the way out, for they found the church doors open, and they passed through them.

These gold and silver coins served as the beginning of the collection of the money needed for the renewal of that church, for the report of this miracle spread throughout that land, and many pious people of their own accord brought gold and silver there. With these funds a new stone church was built, more spacious, sufficiently adorned and provided with all the necessary appurtenances for divine worship. In that church many miracles were accomplished to the glory of Christ God and in praise of the holy Great Martyr George.

They also relate the following miracle, accomplished by the holy Great Martyr George upon a boy wounded by a deadly serpent. The account of this miracle was given by one of the pious ascetics, Abba George, who had a helper of the same name, the holy George.[20]

"Once, when I was walking uphill and holding a cross in my hands, I was met by an old monk; taking the cross from me, he went ahead of me. Having gone a little way, he turned onto a path. I followed after him. Continuing on, I saw a flock of sheep and a shepherd boy lying on the ground and dying from a serpent's bite. Near that place there was a spring. The elder said to me:

"Draw some water, so that I may pour it over the cross."

Then, drawing water and opening the boy's mouth, we poured this water, poured over the cross, into his mouth; and at the same time the elder said:

"In the name of the Holy Trinity, the holy Great Martyr George heals you!"

Bending over, the boy vomited forth the deadly poison and stood up on his feet.

Then the elder said to him:

20. That is, of the same name, bearing an identical name.

"Tell me, did you not swear yesterday to a poor widow, whose sheep you had been charged to tend, but which you sold for three silver coins? Did you not tell her that a wolf had eaten the sheep?"

The boy answered him:

"Yes, Father, it was indeed so. But how did you come to know this?"

The elder said to him:

"When I was sitting in my cell, a certain man came to me on a white horse and said to me:

"Sophronius, rise and go quickly to the spring that is on your right, to the south. There you will find a boy bitten by a serpent, and you will also see a monk carrying in his hand a cross carved of wood. Take that cross, pour water over it, and give that water to the boy to drink, and say these words: 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, the servant of God, the martyr George, heals you.' Then say to that boy: Swear no more by the name of God, nor by His saints; deal unjustly with no one; and give back the sheep to that poor widow, lest something even worse befall you."

When the youth heard this from the elder, he fell at his feet and said:

"Forgive me, Father, for everything was indeed so: I sold the widow's sheep for three silver coins, and yesterday I deceived her, saying that a wolf had eaten her sheep. The woman said to me: 'Is this true, or not?' And I said to her: 'Yes, I can call the true God to witness.' The woman said to me: 'Do you not know that I am a poor widow? Yet act as you know best. But mind, God and the holy George will call you to account, for I had promised to give that sheep to the poor on the feast of George.' But I," the youth continued, "since I was tempted and fell into sin, I beseech you, Father, pray for me to God and to the holy George, that my sin may be forgiven me. And now I will give that woman three goats for the day of remembrance of the holy George, and for the rest of my life each year on the day of remembrance of the holy martyr I will give a tenth part of all that I earn for the poor."

In this way the healed youth, having obtained prayer and forgiveness from the blessed Sophronius, set about his work, giving thanks to God and to His servant, the holy Great Martyr George.

One cannot fail to mention also the glorious miracle of the slaying of the serpent, accomplished by the holy Great Martyr George near his Palestinian fatherland, in the Syro-Phoenician land, in the city of Beirut,[21] standing on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, not far from the city of Lydda, where the body of the holy Great Martyr was also buried. The place where this miracle was accomplished is shown to travelers in Palestine. According to the account of the chroniclers of this miracle, it took place under the following circumstances.

Near the aforementioned city of Beirut, close to the Lebanon mountains, there was a large lake in which lived a destructive serpent, great and terrible. Coming out of this lake, that serpent would seize many people, drag them into the lake, and there devour them. Many times the people, armed, went out against it, but each time the serpent drove the people back, for, approaching the city walls, it filled the air with its deadly breath, so that already from this alone many fell sick and died. Because of this there was constant sorrow, grief, lamentation, and great weeping in that city. In this city lived unbelieving people, idol-worshippers; here too lived their king himself.

Once the inhabitants of that city gathered together and went to their king and said to him:

"What shall we do, for behold, we are perishing because of that serpent?"

He answered them:

"I will tell you what the gods reveal to me."

Then the king, by the instruction of the demons dwelling in the idols, destroyers of human souls, announced to them this decision: if they did not wish all to perish, let them give to that serpent as food, each day by lot, their children, sons or daughters. The king added:

"When the turn comes to me, then I too, although I have but one daughter, will give her up."

The inhabitants of that city accepted this royal, or rather demonic, counsel, and every day, both the important and the unimportant citizens gave up to the serpent for food one of their sons or daughters, al-

21. Beirut (or Berytus) was in antiquity the most important city of the Phoenicians.

though they grieved and wept greatly over them. Those given up to be devoured by the serpent were placed on the shore of the lake, dressed in their finest garments; that serpent, coming out of the lake, would seize them and devour them.

When the turn had passed through all the people of that city, they came to the king himself and said to him:

"Behold, O king, by your counsel and decree we have been giving our children to the serpent. The turn has now passed through everyone. What now do you command us to do?"

The king answered them:

"I too will give up my daughter, although she is my only one. Afterward I will tell you what the gods reveal to us."

Calling his daughter to him, the king bade her adorn herself as splendidly as possible; he greatly pitied her and wept over her together with all his household, but he could in no way break that decree, as though divine, announced by the demons. Preparing to send his daughter to be devoured by the serpent, the king looked at her from the height of his palace and with tears in his eyes followed her with his gaze.

The maiden meanwhile was placed in the customary spot on the shore of the lake. Awaiting the mortal hour when the serpent would come out of the lake and devour her, she wept bitterly.

By the providence of God, who wills the salvation of all, and who was pleased to save that city from destruction of soul and body, at this time the holy Great Martyr George, a warrior of the Heavenly King, bearing a spear in his hand, rode up on his horse to that place.

Seeing the maiden standing by the lake and weeping bitterly, he asked her:

"Why are you standing here, and what are you weeping about?"

She answered him:

"Good youth! Flee quickly from here on your horse, lest you perish together with me."

The saint said to her:

"Fear not, maiden, but tell me, what are you waiting for in the presence of all the people looking at you?"

The maiden answered him:

"Glorious youth! I see that you are brave and valiant. But why do you wish to die together with me? Flee quickly from this place!"

The saint said to her:

"No, I will not ride away from this place until you tell me why you stand here, why you weep, and whom you are awaiting here."

After this, the maiden told him everything in order, both about the serpent and about herself.

St. George said to her:

"Fear not, maiden, for in the name of my Lord, the true God, I will save you from the serpent."

She answered him:

"Valiant warrior! Why do you wish to perish with me? Flee, and save yourself from a bitter death. It is enough that I alone die here, all the more since you will not save me from the serpent, and you yourself will perish."

While the maiden was speaking these words to the saint, suddenly a terrible serpent came forth from the lake and made its way toward its customary food.

Seeing it, the maiden cried out in a loud voice:

"Flee, man, for the serpent is already coming!"

But Saint George, making the sign of the Cross over himself and calling upon the Lord, saying, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," set out upon his horse against the serpent, brandishing his spear, and striking the serpent forcefully in the throat, wounded it and pressed it to the ground; the saint's horse trampled the serpent under its feet. Then Saint George commanded the maiden that, binding the serpent with her girdle, she should lead it into the city, gentle as a dog; and the people, looking in astonishment at the serpent being led by the maiden, fled in fear. Saint George then said to the people:

"Fear not, only trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in Him, for it is He who sent me to you in order to save you from the serpent."

Then Saint George slew that serpent with his sword in the midst of the city. The inhabitants of the city, dragging the carcass of the serpent outside the city, burned it.

After this, the king and the people who lived in that city believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and received holy Baptism: there were 25,000 persons baptized, not counting women and children. In that place a church was afterward built, very spacious and beautiful, in the name of the Most Pure Virgin Mary, Daughter of the King of Heaven, God the Father, Mother of His Son, and Bride of the Holy Spirit, and also in honor of the victorious Saint George, who by his help preserves the Church of Christ and every orthodox soul from the invisible devourer in the abyss of hell, and also from sin, as from a deadly serpent, just as he delivered the aforementioned maiden from the visible serpent.[2736]

There also occurred here a certain new miracle. When this church was consecrated in honor of the Most Holy Theotokos and the holy Great Martyr George, then, as a sign of the divine grace poured out here, a spring of living water flowed forth from the sanctuary of this church, healing every sickness of all who come with faith, to the glory of the King of glory Himself (in Whom is the spring of eternal life), God in the Trinity, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, praised in His saints forever. Amen.

Troparion, Tone 4:

O Great Martyr George, victorious, deliverer of captives and protector of the poor, physician of the infirm, champion of kings, entreat Christ God that our souls be saved.

Another troparion, the same tone:

Thou didst labor the good labor, O Passion-bearer of Christ, and by faith didst rebuke the impiety of the tormentors, and didst offer thyself as a sacrifice acceptable to God; wherefore thou didst receive the crown of victory, and by thy prayers, O Saint, thou grantest to all the forgiveness of transgressions.

Kontakion, Tone 4:

Cultivated by God, thou didst appear as a most honorable worker of piety, gathering for thyself the sheaves of virtues; for thou didst sow in tears and reap in joy, and having suffered martyrdom with thy blood, thou didst receive Christ; and by thy prayers, O Saint, thou grantest to all the forgiveness of transgressions.

On the same day, the memory of the holy martyr Empress Alexandra and of the holy martyrs Anatolius and Protoleon.

* * *

ALSO COMMEMORATED THIS DAY

On the same day, the memory of the holy martyr Empress Alexandra and of the holy martyrs Anatolius and Protoleon.

NOTES

2736. On the basis of this narrative, the holy Great Martyr George is often depicted on icons in the image of a horseman seated on a white horse and striking with a spear a terrible serpent. The image of Saint George on horseback, as a sign of victory, has been adopted for our national coat of arms, and also for the badge of distinction bestowed upon the breast of an Orthodox warrior for his military exploits. The holy Great Martyr George is considered among us the principal protector of shepherds and herds on the ground that after his repose he repeatedly rendered help to his neighbors, appearing on horseback. Therefore, on St. George's Day, or as it is popularly called, Yegoryev Day, the pious inhabitants of villages and hamlets of Russia usually drive their livestock out to pasture for the first time after winter, and perform a moleben to the holy Great Martyr with the sprinkling of holy water upon the shepherds and herds.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF APRIL

April 24

24 апреля

New Calendar April 24 · Old Calendar May 7 (civil dates)

Memory of Our Venerable Father Thomas the Fool-for-Christ

Память преподобного отца нашего Фомы юродивого

St. Thomas was a monk in one of the monasteries in Caesarea[1]. He bore the obedience of collecting alms for the needs of his monastery. For these collections he was sent to Antioch[2], near which there was a village belonging to the monastery. When the elder came to the city, he took upon himself the guise of a fool. Once a certain man named Anastasius, the steward (builder) of one church, struck the blessed one on the cheek, because the elder had wearied him with his request for alms for his monastery. Those present were indignant at Anastasius for this. But the blessed Thomas, turning to them, spoke prophetically:

"From this time on I shall receive nothing from Anastasius, and Anastasius will have no opportunity to give anything to me."

Both things soon came to pass: Anastasius died the following day, and the blessed Thomas, on the road from the city to the monastery, fell ill and stopped at a hospice in the suburb of Daphne, at the church of St. Euphemia, where, growing seriously ill, he reposed to immortal life and was buried in the place where wayfarers were interred.

Once a certain dead woman who was a wayfarer was brought there and buried above the grave of this blessed elder; the woman was buried at the second hour of the day, but at the sixth hour the earth cast her

1. Caesarea is the chief city of Cappadocia, which was located in the east of Asia Minor.
2. Here Antioch in Syria is meant, once the magnificent capital of the Syrian state, and now a poor town in Asiatic Turkey.

out, and everyone marveled greatly at this. In the evening she was again buried in the same grave, but the next day they saw that she had been thrown out of the grave a second time; then they buried her in another place.

Some days later another woman was buried in the same manner close to Abba Thomas, for the inhabitants of that place did not understand that it was not pleasing to the departed elder that a woman should be buried near him. When the earth cast out this woman also, then they understood that it was not well-pleasing to the elder that anyone should be buried near his relics.

All that had happened was reported to Patriarch Domnus[3]. By the patriarch's command all the citizens, with candles and hymns, went to Daphne, took up the relics of the saint, carried them with honor into the city, and laid them in the tomb in which the relics of many holy martyrs rested. Over the relics of the saint a small church was erected, and many healings were effected over the sick through his holy relics. Through his prayers the plague in Antioch ceased, on account of which the inhabitants of Antioch established the annual celebration of his memory, glorifying Christ God, to Whom be glory unto ages. Amen.

* * *

Memory of the Holy Martyr Sabbas Stratelates and with him Seventy Soldiers

Память святого мученика Саввы Стратилата и с ним семидесяти воинов

St. Sabbas the Martyr was by birth a Goth[4] and resided in Rome in the reign of the emperor Aurelian[5]. He held the rank of stratelates, that is, he was a voivode, and was faithful and pleasing to the Heavenly King, our Lord Jesus Christ. He often visited in the prisons the sufferers for the name of Christ, gave them help from his means, strengthened them to bear sufferings patiently, and roused them to courageous ascetic labors. So virtuous a life was so pleasing to

3. Patriarch Domnus governed the Church of Antioch from 546 to 560.
4. The Goths were a people of the Germanic tribe, who lived originally along the course of the river Vistula, and afterwards settled along the Danube.
5. *Aurelian*, Roman emperor, reigned from 270 to 275.

God that He, for the sake of the purity and fasting of the saint, granted him power over demons, and he expelled unclean spirits from men.

Soon it was reported to the emperor that St. Sabbas was a Christian, and he was brought before the emperor for interrogation.

Here he fearlessly confessed Christ and, untying his military belt, threw it down, rejecting also his voivodeship rank, and at the same time showing his readiness to undergo any torments for the name of Christ.

Then, by the order of the tormentor, the saint was hung up and cruelly beaten, then burned with fire and at last thrown into a cauldron of boiling pitch. But the saint, guarded by the invisible power of God, remained unharmed and came out of the cauldron unhurt.

Seeing this miracle, seventy soldiers who were present believed in Christ and loudly confessed themselves Christians. Immediately, at the command of the tormentor, they were beheaded with the sword, and thus received the crown of martyrdom, as it were from the hands of Christ Himself.

St. Sabbas, however, was cast into prison and there was granted a divine vision and help: as he prayed at midnight, Christ appeared to him, illumining him with the light of His glory, and exhorted him not to fear the torments but to go fearlessly to his struggle. And when Sabbas was brought a second time for interrogation, and, being compelled to worship idols, first by caresses, then by persuasion, then by cruel tortures, did not yield to the tormentors, they cast him into the river, where, drowning, he completed the course of his martyrdom[6], attaining the quiet haven in the Kingdom of Christ.

Troparion, Tone 5:

Having laid aside the belt of earthly rank and its honors, O sufferer, before the deceitful tyrant-king thou didst confess Christ God, and for His sake didst undergo many sufferings, O glorious one. Therefore thou wast crowned with the victor's wreath by the King of all kings, and art brightly adorned with the heavenly

6. The death of St. Sabbas took place in 272.

hosts. Standing before Him, O Sabbas, pray that He save our souls.

Kontakion, Tone 4:

Having shown thyself invincible, O stratelates, thou didst overcome the barbarian plots, and, suffering as a martyr, O glorious and most steadfast one, thou didst vanquish the multitude of invisible foes; wherefore thou hast woven the wreath of victory. Pray to Christ for us, O all-blessed Sabbas, who honor thee with faith.

* * *

Memory of Our Venerable Mother Elisabeth the Wonderworker

Память преподобной матери нашей Елисаветы чудотворицы

The Venerable Elisabeth was chosen for the service of God even from her mother's womb, for before Elisabeth's birth it was revealed by God to her mother that she would bear a daughter who would be a chosen vessel of the Holy Spirit. Given to the service of God from her early years and betrothed to the immortal Bridegroom Christ, St. Elisabeth in the angelic order served God, among other virgin nuns[7], wearing down her body by fasting and labors, and so pleased God that she received from Him the gift of healing the infirmities of men, not only bodily but also spiritual. By her prayer she healed every bodily sickness; by her words and God-inspired instructions she healed human souls, leading them to repentance and to every virtue. Her only clothing was a rough hair shirt, and although her body froze from the cold, her spirit always burned with the flame of divine love.

7. St. Elisabeth was a nun of the Constantinople monastery built in honor of the Unmercenary Saints Cosmas and Damian by the emperor Justin I (who reigned from 518 to 527). In this monastery she was afterwards abbess (superior). The exact time of her life and activity cannot be indicated, for lack of information about this in historical sources. But on the basis of the circumstance that a canon in her honor was written in the second half of the 9th century by St. Joseph the Hymnographer (who died in 883), it is concluded that St. Elisabeth lived between the 6th and 9th centuries.

Being appointed abbess over the sisters, the saint showed still greater labors, caring for the salvation of their souls.

Her abstinence was excessive, for she spent many years without eating bread, nourishing herself only on fruits and vegetables; oil and wine she never tasted during her whole life. Very often she fasted for forty days, like the great Moses, taking nothing during that time[8]. For three years, imitating the humility of the Gospel publican (see Lk. 18:13), she did not lift her bodily eyes to heaven, but with the eyes of her soul she always gazed toward God, who dwells in the heavens, and, contemplating Him in her mind as seated on a high and adorned throne, surrounded by Seraphim, she did not turn her thoughts to earthly things. When, as was her custom, she prayed alone at night, she was illumined from above by a heavenly light.

Besides this, St. Elisabeth also performed many miracles: once she killed a fierce serpent by her prayer; at another time she healed a woman who had long suffered from a hemorrhage; she also cast unclean spirits out of men, and performed many other miracles. The miracles were wrought by her not only during her life but also after her blessed death. At her tomb many kinds of healing were granted to the sick; for example, many blind men received their sight at her grave. May Christ God, wondrous in His saints, be glorified through her!

* * *

Passion of the Holy Martyrs Pasicrates and Valentine

Страдание святых мучеников Пасикрата и Валентина

The martyrs of Christ, Pasicrates and Valentine, were from Rhodostolon, a city of Moesia, and, being soldiers, served under the hegemon of that country, Ausolanus. In that land there were many idolaters who offered sacrifices to demons, for the rulers of the country, by threat of torments, compelled people to idol-worship. The Christians of that country, fearing torments, fled and hid themselves. These two holy men, however, openly and boldly declared themselves

8. Moses fasted forty days and nights when he ascended Mount Sinai, where God gave him the commandments, the Decalogue (Ex. 24:12–18).

Christians, and, glorifying the one true God, cursed the lifeless idols. For this they were seized by the idolaters and brought to the court, where they were compelled to kindle incense before the idols. Here stood an idol of Apollo. St. Pasicrates, approaching the idol, spat in its face and said:

"Such is the honor due to this god!"

Immediately Pasicrates was bound with heavy chains and cast into prison. The soldier of Christ, adorned with these fetters as with a golden royal raiment, rejoiced that he had been granted the grace to bear these chains for Christ. With him Valentine was also cast into prison. Soon they were again summoned for judgment before the hegemon. When they appeared in the court, there also came the brother of Pasicrates, Papian. He was a Christian, but from fear of torments he had offered sacrifice to the idols. Papian began with tears to beseech his brother that, following his own example, he should offer incense to the image, so that, having become for a time as it were an idolater, he might be delivered from cruel torments; but Pasicrates rejected his brother's request and called him unworthy to be counted in his family because he had fallen away from the faith of Christ. He himself, approaching the altar and placing his hand upon the fire, said to the hegemon:

"The body is mortal and, as you yourself see, burns in the fire; but the soul, being immortal, scorns all these visible torments."

St. Valentine, questioned by the governor on the spot, gave the same answer and showed his complete readiness to endure every torment for Christ. Both of them were sentenced to beheading by the sword. When the tormentor's servants were leading them outside the city to death, Pasicrates' mother followed after them, exhorting him to go to his death fearlessly, for she feared that he would be frightened, since he was very young. The holy martyrs were beheaded. St. Pasicrates was twenty-two years old, and Valentine thirty. His mother, however, received their bodies with joy and gladness, and buried them with honor, glorifying Christ God.

Suffering of the Holy Martyrs Eusebius, Neon, Leontius, Longinus and Others with Them

Страдание святых мучеников Евсевия, Неона, Леонтия, Лонгина и прочих с ними

Shortly after the death of the glorious Great Martyr George, the emperor Diocletian issued a command that all Christians, wherever they might be, and especially those who were in prisons, should be compelled to worship idols; those who carried out this command he ordered to be released to freedom, while those who did not submit he commanded to be put to death.

The holy martyrs commemorated today, Eusebius, Neon, Leontius and Longinus, were at this time in prison[9]; together with them were many Christians, numbering about forty persons. Seeing the miracles performed by St. George, they believed in Christ and boldly confessed Him openly, for which they were seized and cast into prison in chains.

When they were brought out of the prison for examination before the judge, they did not renounce Christ, but put to shame the pagan gods. For their courageous confession of the name of Christ they were subjected to many tortures: the tormentors, hanging them up, beat them and scraped their bodies with various iron instruments until their inner parts were laid bare. Finally, the holy martyrs were beheaded, and thus received crowns in the Kingdom of Heaven[10].

On the same day is the commemoration of the Venerable Sabbas of the Kiev Caves, who pursued the ascetic life, in all likelihood, at the beginning of the thirteenth century. His relics are in the Caves of St. Anthony.

* * *

9. Perhaps the holy martyrs commemorated today, Eusebius, Neon, Leontius and Longinus, performed the duty of guards at the prison in which the Christians were confined. It is possible, however, that they came into the prison as visitors, with the aim of alleviating the sufferings of the Christians by expressing sympathy and encouragement to them and by material assistance.

10. The martyrs' death took place in 304. – The head of St. Martyr Longinus is in Italy, in the city of Capua (not far from Naples).

ALSO COMMEMORATED THIS DAY

On the same day is the commemoration of the Venerable Sabbas of the Kiev Caves, who pursued the ascetic life, in all likelihood, at the beginning of the thirteenth century. His relics are in the Caves of St. Anthony.



THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF APRIL

April 25

25 апреля

New Calendar April 25 · Old Calendar May 8 (civil dates)

Life and Suffering of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark

Житие и страдание святого Апостола и Евангелиста Марка

St. Mark was a Jew by birth, of the tribe of Levi and the priestly clan, and at first lived in Jerusalem. In Hebrew Mark was called John; his other name, Mark, was Latin. He added this name to his Hebrew one[1] later, before setting out for a foreign land, when he journeyed with the Apostle Peter to preach the Gospel in Rome, the capital of the world at that time. According to the tradition accepted by the Orthodox Church, and in agreement with the testimony of certain ancient writers,[2] he was one of the seventy disciples of the Lord and was therefore himself an eyewitness to some events in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the account given by the Evangelist Mark himself of the betrayal of our Lord Jesus Christ unto death in the Garden of Gethsemane,[3] mention is made of a certain young man who, when all the Lord's disciples had forsaken Him, alone followed the Divine Prisoner, wrapped in a linen cloth over his naked body; but when the soldiers seized him, he left the cloth in their hands and fled from them naked (Mk. 14:51–52). The young man's attire[4] showed that he had gone out suddenly at night at the noise of the crowd, doubtless from the house to which the garden belonged. From ancient times a tradition arose that this young man was Mark himself, and that the Garden of Gethsemane

1. According to the custom of the Jews of that time.
2. Origen, presbyter of Alexandria, 3rd c.; St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Cyprus, 4th c.; and others.
3. *Vertograd*: a garden.
4. A linen cloth wrapped around the naked body.

belonged to the family from which Mark came. The Book of the Acts of the Apostles bears witness that Mary, the mother of the Evangelist Mark, had a house of her own in Jerusalem,[5] where the Apostle Peter found shelter after the Angel had miraculously led him out of prison (Acts 12:1–12). After the Lord's ascension into heaven, during the persecution of the Christians, this house served as a place of prayerful assembly for many of the faithful in Jerusalem and as a shelter for some of the Apostles. Thus, in his mother's house, St. Mark had the opportunity to remain constantly in fellowship with the Christians, taking part in their prayerful gatherings, and to become acquainted with the Apostles themselves. He entered into especially close fellowship with the Apostle Peter, who cherished for him a fatherly love and affection, as is evident from the words of the Apostle Peter himself, who calls Mark his son in his epistle, saying: "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Mark my son" (1 Pet. 5:13). The Holy Apostle Barnabas, a Levite by descent and a native of the island of Cyprus, was St. Mark's uncle. Through him St. Mark became known also to the other chief Apostle, St. Paul, when the latter, after his miraculous conversion to faith in Christ (see Acts 9), first came to Jerusalem.[6] Having entered into close fellowship with these two chief Apostles, Peter and Paul, St. Mark became their close associate and carried out the instructions entrusted to him now by one, now by the other of these great Apostles.

About the year 44 or 45 after the Nativity of Christ, a great calamity befell the Christians of Jerusalem. At the sight of the Christians multiplying in Jerusalem, the malice of the enemies of the Christian faith—the Jews—reached its height. Inflamed by hatred for the Christians, the Jews fell upon their houses and ruthlessly plundered all their property, so that the Christians had to endure great hunger. Hearing of the dire plight of their brethren in Christ, the Christians of Antioch came at once to their aid, made a collection among themselves, and entrusted Barnabas and Paul, who were then in Antioch, with personally

5. There is a tradition that the Pascha was celebrated by the Lord Jesus Christ in the house of Mark's mother, Mary.

6. Approximately in the year 39 or 40 after the Nativity of Christ.

delivering relief to the Christians in Jerusalem. Having arrived in Jerusalem and fulfilled the commission of the Christians of Antioch, Barnabas and Paul returned to Antioch, and this time took Mark with them (Acts 12:25). From that time Mark, becoming an associate of Barnabas and Paul, took upon himself the great labor of the Apostolic ministry, proclaiming the faith of Christ to Jews and pagans. Together with Paul and Barnabas, St. Mark took part in their first Apostolic journey from Antioch, as their close assistant in preaching the Gospel.[7] With Paul and Barnabas, Mark was in the seaport city of Seleucia,[8] from which he sailed to the island of Cyprus and crossed it from east to west, from Salamis to Paphos. There in Paphos, Mark witnessed the miraculous striking with blindness, at the word of the Apostle Paul, of the Jewish sorcerer Bar-Jesus, named Elymas, who was trying to turn the proconsul Sergius, who had summoned Barnabas and Paul to hear the word of God, away from faith in the Lord (see Acts 13:6–12). But when they arrived at the city of Perga,[9] Mark left the Apostles Paul and Barnabas and returned to Jerusalem, to his mother's house. On arriving in Jerusalem, Mark joined the Apostle Peter and soon set out with him on an Apostolic journey to preach the Gospel in Rome. At this time there were already believers in Christ in Rome. The Book of the Acts of the Apostles bears witness that among those who had seen the extraordinary change that came upon the Apostles after the descent of the Holy Spirit, and had heard the Apostle Peter's first preaching of Christ the Savior,[10] were Jews and proselytes—that is, pagans converted to Judaism—who had come from Rome (see Acts 2:10–41). On their return to Rome, these people undoubtedly brought their faith in Christ with them and shared it with others there. Doubtless, after this as well, many Jews who lived in Rome in great numbers, visiting Jerusalem every year for the feasts, when it was already filled with the teaching of the Gospel, and hearing the preaching of Christ there, returned to Rome as Christians. Finally, many Christians came to Rome, the capit-

7. In the year 44 or 45.
8. On the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea.
9. In Asia Minor.
10. Of whom about 3,000 men received baptism.

al of the world, from every quarter on civil and other business, and helped to increase there the number of those who believed in Christ. By his preaching and miracles, with the help of St. Mark, the Holy Apostle Peter spread and strengthened the Church of Christ in Rome still further, converting to Christ a multitude of people, both Jews and pagans. Hearing the holy words of the Gospel preached by the Apostles and burning with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Christians of Rome were not content with the Apostles' oral preaching of Jesus Christ alone, but desired to have among them also a written record of the teaching delivered to them orally. They approached St. Mark, the companion of the Apostle Peter, and earnestly begged him to write down all the holy words which he and Peter had spoken to them concerning Christ the Lord, and to leave them this holy writing as a memorial. Mark fulfilled the good desire of the Roman Christians and wrote his Gospel for them, in which,[11] setting forth events from the life of the Lord Jesus Christ during His sojourn on earth, he accurately recorded all that he remembered of what the Lord taught and did, taking great care not to omit anything he had heard or to alter it. Mark submitted what he had written to the Apostle Peter for his consideration, and St. Peter by his testimony confirmed the truth of the Gospel written by Mark and approved it for reading in the churches.[12] Therefore Mark's Gospel was accepted by all the churches without any objection, as an Apostolic and God-inspired writing.[13]

After his labors in Rome, St. Mark, at the command of the Apostle Peter, went to preach the Gospel in the city of Aquileia, situated on the northern shore of the Adriatic Sea. In this wealthy city, called the second Rome,[14] Mark founded a church; he also visited other places along the coast of the Adriatic Sea, preaching the Gospel and establishing churches of God everywhere. After this, again at the direction of the Apostle Peter, St. Mark went to preach the Gospel in Egypt. This was, as Eutychius, Patriarch of Alexandria, testifies, in the ninth year

11. As Papias testifies.
12. In his Gospel the Evangelist Mark chiefly describes the actions of the Savior, especially the miraculous ones, which had a greater influence on the minds of the pagans than the teaching did.
13. The time of its writing falls approximately in the year 46 after the Nativity of Christ.
14. Because the Roman emperors loved to live there.

of the reign of Claudius.[15] In Egypt, a pagan land adjoining Palestine, there had been many Jews since the time of Alexander the Great[16] and Ptolemy Lagus, king of Egypt.[17] They inhabited whole cities there, had their synagogues and their Sanhedrin, even a temple[18] like the Temple in Jerusalem, as well as priests and Levites according to the Law of Moses. Here in Egypt, by order of King Ptolemy Philadelphus,[19] the books of the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament were translated from Hebrew into Greek, whereby the divine revelation concerning the salvation of the human race became accessible even to the pagans themselves. The people there still vividly remembered the notable fall of the idols in an Egyptian temple, which, according to the testimony of the Fathers of the Church, accompanied the arrival of the Holy Family with the Divine Infant Jesus, fleeing from the hand of the cruel Herod. Finally, it may even have been that witnesses to the miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles had come to this country also, bringing with them the seeds of Christ's teaching. All this greatly prepared the inhabitants of Egypt to receive the Christian teaching and promised great success for the preaching of St. Mark. And indeed, when Mark, the first of the Apostles to arrive in Egypt, began preaching the Gospel, proclaiming to the people freedom from the devil,[20] at the very beginning of his preaching[21] a great multitude of men and women believed in Christ. In Alexandria itself, the chief city of Egypt, St. Mark founded a church and became its first bishop.

Here St. Mark laboured much in the ascetic feat of enlightening with the light of Christ's faith both Jews and Gentiles, who until then had dwelt in the darkness of idol-worship. Having then set in order the churches in Alexandria and the cities adjoining it by ordaining bishops and other clergy for them, St. Mark afterwards left the land of Egypt. Whither he went from there, and whether he was in Jerusalem at the

15. Around the year 49 A.D.
16. Reigned from 334–324 B.C.
17. 324–284 B.C.
18. Near the city of Iliopolis.
19. Around 271 B.C.
20. Just as once Moses from the heavy yoke of Pharaoh.
21. As the historian Eusebius testifies.

Apostolic Council[22], is unknown. But when the Apostle Paul, before setting out on his second Apostolic journey[23], was with Barnabas in Antioch, then, as the Book of the Acts of the Apostles testifies, St. Mark met them there and from there set out with his uncle Barnabas for the latter's homeland in Cyprus (see Acts 15:36–40). After labouring for some time with Barnabas in the work of preaching the Gospel of Christ, Mark went a second time to Egypt, whither at the same time or a little later the Apostle Peter also came. Preaching the Gospel in various regions of Egypt and establishing churches in them, the Apostles at this time, among other things, laid the foundation of the Church of Christ in the Egyptian city of Babylon, whence Peter also wrote his first catholic epistle to the Christians of Asia Minor (see 1 Pet. 5:13). St. Mark remained in Egypt until the eighth year of the reign of Nero[24].

Afterwards St. Mark again joined the Apostle Paul and became one of his fellow-workers. During the Apostle Paul's imprisonment in Rome[25], St. Mark, together with certain other persons, shared in this Apostle's labours of preaching the Gospel. In his epistle to the Colossians, written from Rome at this time, the Apostle Paul names Mark as one of his few fellow-workers for the Kingdom of God, who were a comfort to him at that time (see Col. 4:10–11). As is evident from the same epistle to the Colossians, Mark, by the Apostle Paul's direction, went from Rome to Asia Minor, to the Phrygian city of Colossae (Col. 2:8–18), to counter the false teachers who were seducing the Colossian Christians[26]. Where St. Mark spent the next few years is unknown. But at a time close to the days of the Apostle Paul's death, St. Mark was in Asia Minor, namely in the city of Ephesus, the homeland of St. Timothy, bishop of the Church of Ephesus. At this time the Apostle Paul, who was again in prison in Rome, wrote an epistle to Timothy, in which, summoning Timothy to Rome to help him, he charged him to bring Mark with him, as needed for his ministry (see 2 Tim. 4:11)[27].

22. Around the year 60 or 51 A.D.
23. From 52 to 55.
24. Reigned from 54 to 68 A.D.
25. From 61 to 63 A.D.
26. Around 67.
27. A contemporary of the holy Apostles.

Here in Rome St. Mark was a witness to the martyr's death for Christ of both his teachers, the great and first-ranking Apostles of Christ Peter and Paul, who at one and the same time suffered for Christ in Rome: Paul, as one who had the right of a Roman citizen, was beheaded with the sword, and Peter was crucified on a cross.

After the death of his great teachers, the Apostles Peter and Paul, the holy evangelist Mark again went to Egypt to strengthen the church he had founded there. He laboured much in the work of preaching the faith of Christ in Alexandria itself. Alexandria, the capital of Egypt, was the centre of Greek learning. Here was the famous library, here pagan learning flourished; for its sake people flocked here from everywhere, so that the city was filled with scholars, philosophers, rhetoricians and poets. Even the Jews, who lived in large numbers in Alexandria, were captivated by pagan learning. To establish the faith of Christ and to counter the learned pagans and Jews, St. Mark founded in Alexandria a Christian catechetical school. In later times this school became the centre of Christian enlightenment and became famous for the fact that from it came renowned teachers of the Church, such as Pantaenus, Clement, and certain of the Church Fathers, such as Dionysius of Alexandria, Gregory the Wonderworker and others.

Concerned with the ordering of church worship, St. Mark composed the Order of the Liturgy and handed it down to the Christians of the Alexandrian Church. This Order of the Liturgy was preserved for a long time in this church and in the following centuries. In the worship of the Egyptian Christians (Copts) there have survived to this day certain prayers attributed to the evangelist Mark.

Having set in order the Church of Alexandria, the holy evangelist Mark, in his concern for the preaching of Christ's teaching, did not neglect with his attention and zeal the inhabitants of other cities and regions of Egypt either; but as a strong and valiant ascetic, Mark, led by the Spirit of God, with all zeal and fervour hastened everywhere with the preaching of Christ's teaching. He visited many inland countries of Africa, was in Libya, Marmarica, Cyrenaica and the Pentapolis. All these lands were sunk in the darkness of pagan idol-worship. Everywhere, in cities, villages and at crossroads, shrines had been built in

which idols were set up and in which sorcery, divination and magic were practised. Passing through these cities and villages with the preaching of the Gospel, St. Mark enlightened the hearts of people who dwelt in the darkness and gloom of idol-worship with the light of divine teaching, at the same time performing great miracles among them. In a word, by the grace of God he healed the sick, cleansed lepers, and cast out unclean and fierce spirits.

And his preaching, accompanied by great and wondrous miracles, had enormous success. Shrines fell, idols were overthrown and smashed, people were cleansed and enlightened, being baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Everywhere churches of God were established through the evangelist Mark, and the Church of Christ flourished in the lands of Egypt. Under the influence of the holy words of the evangelist Mark's preaching, and under the influence of the high purity and holiness of his own virtuous life, the Egyptian Christians, under the working of divine grace, showed in their struggles toward the attainment of salvation such purity and such height of perfection that their life, filled with the holiness of Christian virtue, was an object of great wonder and praise even from pagans and unbelieving Jews. Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, and Nicephorus (Xanthopoulos), church historians, preserved in their books the testimony of a certain Philo, a Jewish philosopher, who, praising the virtuous life of the Egyptian Christians, says:

"They (that is, the Christians) abandon all concern for temporal riches and do not trouble themselves about their possessions, counting nothing on earth as their own or dear to them. Some of them, abandoning all care for worldly things, withdraw from the cities and settle in solitary places and gardens, avoiding association with people who are not in accord with them in life, so that they may not be hindered by them in virtue. Abstinence and mortification of the flesh they consider the foundation upon which alone a good life can be built. None of them eats or drinks before evening has come, and some do not partake of food until the fourth day. Others, experienced in the interpretation and understanding of Divine Scripture, filled with thirst for knowledge and nourished on the spiritual food of contemplation, spending their time in

the study of Scripture, forget bodily food until the sixth day. None of them drinks wine at all, and they all eat no meat, adding to bread and water only salt and hyssop[28]. Among them live women as well, who have trained themselves in a virtuous life and have grown so accustomed to it that they remain virgins into old age. But they keep virginity not by compulsion but by free choice, stirred by zeal and love for wisdom, which causes them to renounce bodily pleasures and to strive to bring forth not mortal but immortal offspring, such as only a soul that loves and strives toward God can bring forth from itself. They interpret the Holy Scripture allegorically, discovering its implied and hidden meaning and mysteries; for Scripture, in their opinion, is like a living being: the verbal expressions constitute its visible body, while the thought and mystery hidden beneath these expressions constitute its invisible soul. They rise early for the glorification of God and for prayer, for singing and for hearing the word of God, men and women separately. Some of them remain in continual fasting for seven weeks. The seventh day is held in great honour among them. Preparing for it and for the other feasts, they lie down to rest on the bare ground. The Divine Service is performed among them by priests and deacons, over whom a bishop presides."

Such a fragrant garden of Christ was planted and cultivated by the holy evangelist Mark through his much-suffering labours in the lands of Egypt; there he was also the first bishop, having his episcopal throne in Alexandria, where he also suffered a martyr's death, being the first martyr of the Church of Alexandria.

Concerning the sufferings and martyr's death of St. Mark, the Blessed Symeon Metaphrastes[29] relates the following. While St. Mark was staying in Cyrene, the city of Pentapolis, where he labored in the ascetic struggles of preaching the teaching of Christ and building up the Church of Christ, he received a command from the Holy Spirit to leave there and go to preach the Gospel in Alexandria of Pharitis[30].

28. Bitter herb.

29. A church writer of the 9th century.

30. Alexandria is called Pharitian because to it was joined the small city of Pharos, where stood a large tall column on which at night a fire was lit to show the way into the harbor for ships arriving by sea.

Obedient to the commands of the Holy Spirit, Mark hastened with all zeal to the new labor. Having informed the brethren of the Lord's command to go to Alexandria, he, after a farewell meal with the Christians and sent off with their blessing, sailed from Cyrene to Alexandria. On the second day he reached Alexandria and, disembarking from the ship, came to a place called Mendion. Here, at the entrance to the city gates, his sandal broke in two, which the saint took as a good omen. Seeing a cobbler at once, who was mending old footwear, the saint gave him his sandal to mend. The cobbler, while mending the sandal, accidentally pierced his left hand with his tool, and crying out in pain, called upon the name of God.

Hearing this cry, the Apostle rejoiced in spirit, seeing in it a sign that the Lord would grant him a prosperous journey. The wound on the cobbler's hand was very painful, and blood flowed from it abundantly. St. Mark, spitting on the ground, made a paste, and anointing the wound with it, said:

"In the name of Jesus Christ, who lives forever, be whole."

And at once the wound on the cobbler closed and his hand became healthy. The cobbler, seeing such power in the man standing before him, and the effect of his words, and likewise the purity of his gaze and the holiness of his life, addressed him with a request, saying:

"I beg you, man of God, enter my house and stay with me, your servant, if only for a day, that you may share a meal with me, for today you have shown mercy to me."

The Apostle, gladly agreeing to his request, said:

"May the Lord give you the bread of life, the heavenly bread."

And that man, at once taking the Apostle, with great joy led him into his house. Having entered the house, St. Mark said:

"May the blessing of the Lord be here! Let us pray to God, brethren."

And all together they offered prayer to God. When, after prayer, they sat down to the meal, the cobbler, beginning the conversation courteously, asked the saint:

"Father! Who are you? And whence such power in your word?"

St. Mark answered:

"I am a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

That man said:

"I would like to see this Son of God."

St. Mark answered:

"I will show Him to you!"

And he began to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to expound from the prophets what they had foretold concerning our Lord. That man, listening to his preaching, said:

"I have never heard of that Scripture which you are expounding to me; I have heard only from the Iliad, the Odyssey, and from what the Egyptian youths study."

Then St. Mark, continuing his preaching about Christ, showed him with complete clarity that the wisdom of this age is "folly"[31] before God. That man believed everything St. Mark told him, and seeing his miracles, was himself baptized, and with him his whole household was baptized, together with a great multitude of people of that district. This man's name was Ananias. The number of believers there increased day by day. Then the city's rulers, hearing that a certain Galilean who had come to them was reviling their gods and forbidding the offering of sacrifices to them, sought to kill St. Mark and gathered to deliberate how to seize him. St. Mark, learning of this their decision, hastened to appoint Ananias as bishop for the believers, and three presbyters — Maleon (or Malchus), Savinus, Cerdon — seven deacons and eleven clerics for the church service and, fleeing from there, came again to Pentapolis. Having stayed there two years, strengthening the brethren who were there and appointing bishops, presbyters and clerics in the surrounding lands and cities, St. Mark returned again to Alexandria. Here he found the brethren increased in number and prospering in the grace and faith of the Lord. In Alexandria there already existed a Christian church, built near the sea at a place called "Bucolus"[32]. At the sight of the church St. Mark rejoiced and, bending his knees, glorified God. St. Mark remained in Alexandria for a fairly long time. The Christians of that church grew in number and, strengthening in faith, openly re-

31. *Buistvo* — madness, folly (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18–22).

32. *Vukul*, that is, a place for feeding oxen, from the Greek word for ox.

proached the pagans for idol-worship. The pagan governors, learning of St. Mark's stay in their city and hearing that he performed great miracles: healing the sick, restoring hearing to the deaf, giving sight to the blind, were inflamed with hatred and envy against him and sought him. Long not finding him, they, gathering in their pagan temples, with gnashing of teeth, cried out in wrath:

"Oh, what trouble this sorcerer and magician causes us!"

The most radiant feast of Pascha was approaching. And so, on 24 April, on the day of Christ's bright Resurrection, with which on this occasion the pagan feast in honor of Serapis coincided, the pagans found an opportunity to seize St. Mark. The holy Evangelist was celebrating the Divine service on that day. The impious pagans saw in this a convenient occasion and, gathering in a great crowd on account of their feast, suddenly attacked the church. They seized St. Mark, bound him with ropes, and dragging him through the streets and suburbs of the city, they cried:

"Let us lead this ox to the ox-stall, that is, to the cattle pen."

And the saint, enduring torment, gave thanks to the Lord, saying:

"I thank Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, that Thou hast counted me worthy to endure these sufferings for Thy name."

The saint was dragged over the ground strewn with sharp stones, so that his body, torn upon the stones, was covered with wounds, and the blood flowing abundantly from them stained the whole way. The saint, thus torn to pieces, the impious pagans cast into prison, and they themselves, at the approach of evening, gathered to counsel about what death to deliver him to. At midnight an Angel of the Lord appeared to the Apostle-martyr and strengthened him for the struggle of martyrdom by announcing the blessedness awaiting him in heaven; then the Lord Jesus Christ Himself appeared to him, comforting him by His appearance. The next morning the frenzied crowd of pagans brought the Apostle out of the prison and dragged him through the streets of the city. The saint could not endure such torments and soon died, giving thanks to God, praying to Him and saying:

"Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit!"[33]

The unquenchable malice of the pagans was not satisfied with the Apostle's death: they resolved to burn his body. The fire had already been kindled, when suddenly darkness, terrible thunder, an earthquake, rain and hail scattered the crowd of wicked men, and the rain extinguished the fire. The pious Christians, taking the body of the saint with reverence, buried it in a stone tomb at the place of their prayer gatherings.

Over the relics of St. Mark a church was built in the year 310, and they remained in Alexandria until the 9th century. In the first half of this century[34], when the domination of the Arab Muslims and the heresy of the Monophysites had completely weakened Orthodoxy in Egypt, the relics of the holy Evangelist were transferred to Venice, near which (at Aquileia) he for some time labored in preaching the Gospel: there they rest even to this day in a magnificent church dedicated to his name. Here is preserved a very ancient manuscript of the Gospel of Mark, written on fine Egyptian papyrus, according to tradition, by the hand of the Evangelist himself[35].

Troparion, Tone 3:

Having learned from the chief Peter, thou wast an Apostle of Christ, and as a sun thou didst shine upon the lands, having become the adornment of Alexandria, O blessed one: through thee Egypt was freed from delusion, enlightening all by thy Evangelical teaching, as a light, a pillar of the Church. Wherefore, keeping thy memory brightly, we celebrate, O Mark, thou Divinely-voiced: pray to the God whom thou didst preach, that He grant forgiveness of sins to our souls.

Kontakion, Tone 2:

Having received from on high the grace of the Spirit, thou didst destroy the weaving of rhetorical arts, O Apostle, and having

33. St. Mark died during the reign of Nero, around the year 68 A.D.
34. In the year 828.

captured all tongues, O Mark, all-glorious, thou didst bring them to thy Master, preaching the Divine Gospel.

– On icons the Evangelist Mark is depicted together with a lion. A note on this depiction is made at the beginning of the Gospel of Mark. His Gospel begins with the account of the appearance of John the Baptist, who by his preaching of repentance and of the approach of the Kingdom of God proclaimed the Judean wilderness, was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness," and in this respect was likened to the lion that dwells and roars in the wilderness.

– The Alexandrian patriarchs, rightly honoring St. Mark as the founder and patron of their church and the first Patriarch of Alexandria, in their epistles bestow the blessing in these words: "May the blessing of the Lord Christ, of the Most Holy Theotokos, and of the holy Evangelist Mark," and on their seal they have the image of a winged lion holding the Gospel.

* * *

Memory of our Venerable Father Silvester of Obnora

Память преподобного отца нашего Сильвестра Обнорского

Nothing is known concerning the origin and birthplace of the Venerable Silvester[36]. It is known only that he received the monastic tonsure from the Venerable Sergius of Radonezh and at first labored in his monastery. With the blessing of the renowned Radonezh ascetic, Silvester, thirsting for solitude, set off to the distant north-east and settled on the banks of the river Obnora[37]. At that time there were dense forests here, and there was no habitation nearby. Having built himself a poor, cramped cell, the Venerable Silvester began to labor in

35. From the Holy Gospel of Mark, according to the Typikon of the Orthodox Church, except in special cases, is read at the Liturgies from the 11th to the 17th week after Pentecost, then from the 29th to the 34th, excluding Saturdays and Sundays; and on the Saturdays and Sundays of the holy Great Lent, except the Sunday of the first week.

36. The Life of the Venerable Sylvester has not been preserved, and it is scarcely likely that it was written in antiquity. Only the narrative of his miracles is known from manuscripts. Information about his life is drawn only from fragmentary records and from tradition.

37. 105 versts from Yaroslavl and 16 versts from the present district town of Lyubisha in Yaroslavl Province, upstream on the river Obnora, which flows into the river Kostroma.[1*]

complete solitude, enduring every kind of need, but devoting himself to unceasing prayer and vigil.

For a long while no one knew that a hermit lived in the remote forest. But once a certain inhabitant of that region lost his way and, in the depths of the forest, unexpectedly came upon the cell of the solitary. The hermit came out to the astonished traveler, clothed in rags, embarrassed by the appearance of a man in a place so desolate, where until then he had seen no one and had not wished to see anyone. The traveler told the Venerable Father who he was and how he had come there. He also related that, from afar, he had often seen over the place where the hermit lived now bright rays of light, now a pillar of cloud. The Venerable Father wept with sorrow that the place of his solitude had become known. The traveler urged the hermit to tell him his name and how he lived there. Sylvester related that he had lived there for no small time, feeding on tree bark and roots. At first, without bread, he grew weak from hunger and exhaustion and fell to the ground; but then one day a certain wondrous man appeared to him, touched him with his hand, and from that time on he no longer suffered from that distressed condition.

The traveler who had by chance discovered the hermit soon returned to him on purpose, bringing bread and flour for his store.

That single meeting was enough to make the hermit's dwelling place and his ascetic labors known in the surrounding villages, though not nearby. Villagers began to come to the ascetic for edifying conversations and spiritual counsel, and they brought him food as well. Some resolved to remain with him to undertake the saving labor under his guidance. Seeing their sincere love for him and their free desire for ascetic struggle, the Venerable Sylvester did not forbid them to build new cells, so that many new ascetics gathered around him, and there arose a pressing need for a house of God to be built. Then Sylvester himself went to Moscow and, from Metropolitan Alexis, asked for a blessing to build a church; he received an antimension and was appointed hegumen of the first monastic community to arise in the Obnora region.

By the labors of the Venerable Father and of the brethren gathered about him, a church was built in honor of the Resurrection of Christ the Savior.

Now still more people came to Sylvester, both common folk and princes and boyars. Some wished to see the Venerable Father, to receive his blessing and hear his instructive word; others, to repent of their sins and receive forgiveness and consolation; some, in order to dedicate themselves for all their lives to the monastic struggle under the guidance of an experienced ascetic.

Devoting himself tirelessly to the work of establishing the monastery, the Venerable Sylvester made use of every spare moment and every convenient time to withdraw from the monastery into the forest solitude for solitary prayer and vigil, so dear and habitual to his soul. But when he returned from such solitude, a crowd of people was already waiting for him near the monastery, wishing to see him and to receive his blessing and instruction.[38] They brought children and the sick, asking for his blessing and healing prayers. Even now there exists near the former monastery a grove, part of that forest into which the Venerable Father withdrew for solitude; there also exists a well on the slope to the river Obnora, which the Venerable Sylvester dug above a spring.

Thus in the forest wilderness there arose an active life, representing a union of labor and vigil, fasting and prayer, bodily sorrows and spiritual joys.

The Venerable Father grew old and fell into a fatal illness. The brethren gathered around the bed of the sick man in his cell and with tears expressed their grief, being bereft of their leader and guardian and fearing for the fate of the monastery. "Do not grieve over this, my beloved brethren," the Venerable Sylvester said to them in consolation. "All is in God's will. Keep the commandments of the Lord, and do not fear to suffer hardship in this life, that you may receive a reward in heaven. If I have boldness before God and my work is pleasing to Him,

38. The place of conversation with the people had long been marked by a chapel, but later it was moved nearer the village, since on its site it was intended to build a church in the name of the Venerable Sergius of Radonezh.

this holy place will not be diminished even after my departure. Only pray to the Lord God and to His Most Pure Mother, that you may be delivered from the temptations of the evil one."

The repose of the Venerable Father took place on 25 April 1379, on the feast of the holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark. His body was buried beside the wooden church of the Resurrection, on the right side.

The monastery founded by the Venerable Sylvester did not cease to exist with the death of its founder: for more than four hundred years monastic life flowed here, one generation of monks succeeding another, serving the enlightenment of this remote region.

After the death of the Venerable Father, miracles began to take place at his tomb, so that in the course of time Venerable Sylvester came to be honored as a wonderworker in near and distant places.

No continuous records of such miracles were kept in the monastery; nevertheless, on some ancient objects that are preserved to this day in the Church of the Resurrection there are inscriptions (chased, embroidered and handwritten) recording the donation of these objects to the monastery of the Venerable Sylvester, the Wonderworker of Obnora.[39] The surviving manuscripts contain a record of miracles beginning with 1645; in all, 23 miracles are described. At the reliquary of the Venerable Father there were healed those possessed by demons and those suffering from derangement of mind, from disease of the eyes or blindness, deafness, paralysis, and dumbness. Here is one case. In 1645 a hieromonk serving in the monastery, named Job, ordered the monastery peasants to gather and cut down the grove near the monastery to make a clearing for a fire. The peasants set to the work. On Job's part this order was sinful: he had presumptuously laid hands on the grove of the Venerable Sylvester. Job, who had angered God, was struck with blindness and ceased to see. Four weeks later Job recognized his sin and began to repent before the Lord God, His Most Pure Mother and the Venerable Sylvester, and promised not to act by his own will but to do everything according to the counsel of the brethren. He went to the church, served a moleben, and with tears prayed for for-

39. These include: a silver altar cross of 1693; an air (aer) embroidered in silk, 1699; a Prologue with signature on its leaves, 1661; an icon of the Venerable embroidered in silk, 1664.

giveness of his sins and for the return of his sight. Having venerated the holy icons, the blind Job came to the reliquary of the Venerable Father, kissed it with faith, and regained his sight. After this miraculous healing he gave thanks to the Lord God and to the Venerable Sylvester.

* * *



THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF APRIL

April 26

26 апреля

New Calendar April 26 · Old Calendar May 9 (civil dates)

Passion of the Holy Hieromartyr Basil, Bishop of Amasea[1]

Страдание святого священномученика Василия, епископа Амасийского

After the perdition of the impious monster, the Roman emperor Maxentius[2], who, as an enemy of God, was overthrown by the power of the Cross of the Lord which appeared in the heavens to Constantine the Great, and who perished, as once Pharaoh did, in the watery deep, the Roman realm in the West at last drew breath after its cruel executions. In the East, the persecution of the Christians continued at the hands of another enemy of God, the emperor Maximian[3], who blasphemed the true God and cruelly pursued the faithful servants of Christ. The right-believing emperor Constantine sent against him in the East Licinius[4], having given him his sister in marriage. Licinius at that time believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, and with God's help he so struck down Maximian that the latter barely escaped with a small detachment by flight; but having escaped the hand of Licinius, he did not escape the hand of God. When he was hiding in the Cilician city of Tarsus[5], suddenly his whole body was covered with incurable wounds, so that from unbearable pains as of fire he threw himself upon the ground; his body, like melting wax, fell away from his bones in pieces, and his sinful soul clung only to a skeleton without flesh or blood. At

1. Amasia: a small city in Asia Minor, on the shore of the Black Sea.
2. The son of Maximian, Roman emperor in 306–312, defeated by Constantine the Great and drowned in the Tiber. He was known for his cruelty.
3. Roman emperor who governed Syria and Egypt in 305–313.
4. Emperor from 312 to 324.
5. An ancient city in Asia Minor.

last even the bones began, with agonizing pain, to fall apart one from another; and he, confessing that in his impiety and cruelty he had persecuted and slain the innocent servants of Christ, cursed his gods and died.

Licinius, having taken possession of the whole East, solemnly entered Nicomedia together with his consort. At first peace and quiet reigned everywhere, to the joy and gladness of the faithful, who had rested after the cruel persecution of Maximian; but the enemy of all good, the devil, once more plunged the Christians into a sea of sorrows. Licinius, having strengthened himself in the East, fell away from Christ God and returned to the abominable idol-worship in which he had been brought up. Only for the sake of sharing the throne with Constantine and of marrying his Christian sister did he accept the Christian faith, and he swore to Constantine never to forsake Christianity but always to defend it. Afterwards, having become Eastern emperor, he forgot the mercies of Christ God, who had helped him to defeat Maximian and to take possession of the East; he forgot the benefaction of the emperor Constantine, turned away from him as from Christ, and became his bitter enemy. In Nicomedia he openly renounced Christianity, began to worship idols, and commanded that pagan sacrifices be restored everywhere, and he again began to persecute the faithful. First of all he expelled from the imperial palaces all the Christians: both courtiers and servants and armor-bearers; he began to mock the mercy of Christ, returned to pagan beliefs, and gave himself up without shame to carnal sins. He sank into debauchery and forcibly seduced into adultery the wives and daughters of senators, especially the Christian women, so as to outrage the saints and Christ God Himself. Seeing this, his consort, a faithful Christian named Constantia, grieved in her whole heart and secretly, in letters, related everything to her brother Constantine.

Among her maidservants in the palace there was a maiden, beautiful of face and chaste, named Glafira, a Christian, who was of a noble Italian family. Licinius saw her, and, inflamed by impure lust, commanded the chief of the eunuch bedchamberers, named Venignus, to make known to her his passion. Venignus told Glafira that the emperor, showing her great honor, had fallen in love with her, wished to see her,

and had ordered her to prepare to receive the emperor. But the pious maiden, bearing within her the fear of God, was outraged at such a proposal and drove the eunuch away in shame, reproaching him for shamelessness and lawlessness. Fearing to arouse suspicion and the jealousy of the empress, Glafira told her everything and besought her in these words:

"For the sake of the Lord who created heaven and earth, whom you fear and whom your brother Constantine faithfully serves, do not permit my virginity to be violated by a lawless debauchee."

Hearing such words, the empress warmly loved Glafira for her chastity and fear of God, and began to consider how she might hide her. When the emperor asked about her, the empress ordered such a rumor to be spread in the palace: that Glafira had lost her mind and lay ill, at the point of death. The rumor reached the emperor, and he ceased to think of Glafira. Then the empress, having waited for the right time, secretly sent the pious Glafira out of the palace, providing her abundantly with gold, silver, precious stones, rich utensils, the finest garments, and all sorts of other things. Assigning to her service many male and female slaves, the empress entrusted her to the care of some of her honest and pious servants, and ordered them to escort the maiden into Armenia, saying nothing about her to anyone, and there to dwell until God should change the circumstances for the better. The servants gave the empress their word to carry out the order with the greatest caution. They dressed Glafira and her attendants in men's clothing and safely brought them out of Nicomedia. After a long journey, approaching already to Armenia, they came to the city of Amasea, where the metropolitan of Pontus resided.

The beauty of the city captivated Glafira; she proposed to her companions that they remain in it, if there should be Christians there, and she ordered them to make inquiries of the passers-by. There met them one young man who lived in the house of a respected citizen of Amasea, Quintius. This young man guessed that the travelers were Christians seeking their co-religionists, and reported this to his master. Quintius at once went out himself to the travelers, invited them to come into his house and to live there as long as they wished. He said that he himself

was a Christian, that there were many Christians in the city, and that they had a venerable bishop, like the Apostles. The travelers listened to these words with joy and went to Quintius, who gave them a separate, quiet dwelling for their lodging.

The bishop of the city, named Basil, of whom we are about to speak, a man eloquent and endowed with spiritual virtues, also visited them. He asked the travelers who they were and whence they had come. The chaste Glafira related the whole truth: that she was by birth from Italy, professed the Christian faith, had been a servant of the sister of the emperor Constantine, the consort of the emperor Licinius, and she told also the cause of her wandering. Having heard her account, the holy bishop Basil and Quintius forbade her and her servants to go out anywhere from the house or to speak with anyone, lest the governor of the city learn of her and all the Christians of Amasea suffer misfortune on her account.

At that time the holy bishop Basil was building a church within the city, for the Christians had only a small church outside the city. The blessed Glafira gave the bishop for the church construction much gold and silver, all that the empress had given her, keeping nothing for herself. She wrote to the empress where she was hiding and in whose house she was living; she wrote also about the building of the church, asking that more gold be sent for the completion of the work and the adornment of the church. The empress gladly fulfilled the request, sent abundant gifts to the church and to the bishop, and in a letter entrusted the chaste Glafira to the care of Saint Basil. In a short time, through the machinations of the devil, it happened that Glafira's letter to the empress fell into the hands of the bedchamberer Venignus, who thus learned that the maiden whom everyone had considered dead was alive and was in Amasea. Venignus reported all this to Licinius, who in furious rage wrote to the governor of the city of Amasea an order to put in chains the Christian bishop Basil and the empress's servant Glafira, and immediately to send them to Nicomedia. But by the will of God the blessed and holy virgin Glafira died before the order reached the governor of Amasea. Then the governor put in chains and sent to Nicomedia only Basil, and reported concerning Glafira that she had

already died. Together with the bishop there went from Amasea two deacons, Parthenius and Theotimus, suffering on the way many torments from the impious and cruel soldiers. In Nicomedia the servant of God Basil was cast into prison, and Parthenius and Theotimus settled not far from the dungeon with a hospitable Christian named Elpidiphorus.

Having learned everything about Saint Basil, Elpidiphorus bribed with gold an acquaintance of his, a prison guard, in order to gain access to the bishop for himself and for both deacons. Thus they came often to Saint Basil, every day sang sacred hymns, and at night prayed diligently.

On the eve of the day when he was to appear before the emperor for interrogation, the holy bishop called the guard and asked that the deacons and Elpidiphorus be summoned. The jailer gladly carried out the errand. Then Basil, as was his custom, began to sing the Psalms of David, beginning with the psalm "Remember, O Lord, David and all his affliction" (Ps. 131:1). When he came to the words: "If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me" (Ps. 138:9–10), he repeated them three times, lifting up his hands. Seeing the sorrow and tears of the one praying, the deacons doubted whether the bishop had feared the torments that awaited him. But he knew the meaning of these words, foretelling that his body, after the beheading, would be cast into the sea. Having finished the singing of the psalms, already at dawn, the bishop said to the deacons:

My brethren, at the instigation of the devil cruel temptations lie before us. But do not be afraid, do not faint under sufferings; stand for the faith courageously and unshakably, so that you may not be put to shame on the day of the Lord's coming. With spiritual eyes, look boldly to Him who alone can save us, who can turn sorrow into joy, weeping into gladness, tears into laughter, labors into rest. Count all the blessings and pleasures of life as worthless for the sake of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, that together with all the saints you may be heirs of His Kingdom. Know, my children, that this night the Lord Himself appeared to me and declared what end of life awaits me and how much of

His glory shall be made manifest through me, His servant. Therefore do not grieve, but return to your own place and strengthen the brethren in the spirit of Christianity. In my place, choose as bishop Eutychius, son of Callistus. So God has said to me; He will give you my sinful body.

The deacons wept bitterly. The bishop, having first spoken his customary exhortation, urged them to return to Amasea. To Elpidiphorus he addressed these words:

– My brother! God has chosen you for the service of strangers, and for your love you will receive an eternal reward in heaven. I entrust to you these two of my spiritual children; do not forsake them, but share their sorrow. And when God calls you to His service, labor diligently.

When the saint had dismissed Elpidiphorus and both disciples, the emperor summoned him to interrogation, and first of all began to accuse him: that having received Glafira into his home, he had concealed her and had not reported her to the emperor. The holy bishop at once gave a worthy answer with such boldness that he angered the emperor, and he was again led off to prison. Then Licinius sent to him a tribune[6] with the promise not only to forget the affair of Glafira, but to shower him with honors, even to appoint him chief over all the priests of the city, if the bishop would offer sacrifice to the gods. God's servant Basil answered the tribune:

– Carry my words to the emperor. Even if you were to offer me the whole kingdom, it would not compare with what you wish to take from me: you tempt me to turn away from the true God and serve demons, the destroyers of the soul, to renounce immortal glory and take delight in temporal and fleeting honors, whose brilliance is repugnant to me, which lead not to light but to unbroken darkness. But if you wish to hear my good counsel, then rather confess to me your transgression and return, as before, to Christ, from whom you have fallen away. With humility fall at His feet, the merciful God, our righteous Savior. Repent, turn away from your impiety, lest the righteous Judge, whom you

6. Commander of a military detachment.

called God and from whom you have renounced, punish you for your madness.

Having heard such words of the saint from the tribune, Licinius ordered that the bishop be again exhorted to obey the emperor, and if he refused, to be thrown into the sea after his head had been cut off. "Then we shall see," he said, "whether the Galilean will save him."[7]

The tribune came to the saint again and said to him:

– Choose between life and death; obey the emperor and bow down to his gods, or you will at once be beheaded and cast into the sea.

Hearing such threats, the saint joyfully exclaimed:

– I desire to serve only my immortal King and God, and to obey only His commandments. And those whom you call gods are demons, who together with their worshipers shall be cast by my true and only God, the Lord of all, on the day of righteous judgment into the unquenchable fire of hell, into unbroken darkness, where they will weep and gnash their teeth. Do with me what you wish. I am ready to accept for Christ not only beheading by the sword and drowning in the sea, but countless other torments. Until my last breath I shall not renounce God, my Creator, and I shall not be liable to the eternal fire.

Convinced by these words that exhortations were useless, the tribune ordered the saint to be beaten, then beheaded and cast into the sea. In the same manner very many Christians, especially shepherds of God's flock, were given over to death and became the prey of fishes. The martyr of Christ Basil received the blows with joy and cried out:

– No torments, neither pain, nor prison, nor fire, nor sword, nor death itself, can separate me from the all-merciful God. He is able to deliver me from all torments.

On the way to the place of execution the holy martyr sang the psalms of David. Behind him followed Elpidiphorus with the deacons and some Christians. When all had reached the appointed place, Elpidiphorus gave the soldiers some coins and begged them to allow Basil to speak a little with his friends. The soldiers agreed. Kneeling on the

7. That is, Jesus Christ.

seashore and raising his hands, the faithful servant of Christ began to pray with these words:

– O Lord, my God, who created the heavenly bodiless powers, who stretched out the heavens like a skin, who established the earth upon the waters, who made the sea, who abidest everywhere and always, merciful to those who fear Thee and keep Thy commandments, hear my prayers and preserve Thy faithful flock, whose shepherd Thou hast appointed me, Thy insignificant servant, from every calamity, from Hellenic impiety, from the slander of men who blaspheme Thee. Destroy, O Almighty, the service of idols, overthrow the wiles of the devil, and exalt and multiply Thy holy Church. Bring this city and all the surrounding places to one mind and one accord, that all may confess Thee, the true God. Make all people zealous for goodness and for service to Thee, that in all the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit may be glorified, now and always, unto ages of ages. Amen.

Having finished the prayer, the saint embraced and kissed Elpidiphorus and both deacons, addressing them with the same words with which the great Apostle Paul once greeted the Ephesian presbyters (See Acts 20:28–36):

– Blessed be God, who did not allow us to become the prey of invisible enemies, but crushed their wiles and delivered us; now the enemies will not dare to tempt us. Give my greetings to my brethren and spiritual children. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Then the holy martyr, saying to the executioner, "Friend, do what you have been commanded," knelt again and joyfully stretched out his neck under the stroke of the sword, completing his pious ascetic struggle.

When the saint had been beheaded, Elpidiphorus, giving gold to the soldiers, begged them not to cast the body of the martyr into the sea, but to give it to him for burial. But the soldiers did not agree, saying that they feared the emperor, who would put them to death for this. Then Elpidiphorus asked that at least the head of the bishop be given him, but again he was refused. And so the soldiers placed the body and

head of the martyr in a fisherman's boat, sailed far from the shore, and cast the body into the water in one place and the head in another.

From the shore the Christians watched and wept bitterly, and among them was the priest John of Nicomedia, who saw and afterward described the whole struggle of the holy martyr. The faithful servant of Christ Elpidiphorus led both deacons back to his house and comforted them as much as he could.

On the same night a divine vision came to him in a dream; an Angel appeared to him and said:

– Bishop Basil is now in Sinope and is waiting for you there. Take his deacons and set out by ship to him.

The vision was repeated three times during the night. Elpidiphorus told the deacons about it and asked them whether they knew what place or city Sinope was. Parthenius answered:

– Sinope is a seaside city, where the holy Apostle Andrew preached the teaching of Christ. And I saw in a dream St. Basil. It seemed to me that he gave his hand to the Apostle, entered the church together with him, and said to me: "What you see will come to pass."

Then Elpidiphorus, taking with him enough gold and everything necessary for the journey, boarded a ship with the deacons and sailed to the city of Sinope with fervent prayer that God would explain the dream vision.

As the ship drew near to Sinope, Elpidiphorus again saw in a dream an Angel, who said:

– On the right side of the city cast a net into the sea, and you will find the treasure you seek.

Pointing with his finger to the place, the Angel also indicated the signs by which to find it. It seemed to Elpidiphorus that he saw there a bright mansion, and in it Basil with a multitude of shining warriors. "Do you see," the Angel continued, "him whom you sought? In the morning take him." Rising from sleep, Elpidiphorus told his companions of the vision.

Early in the morning they set out for the right side of the city and, by the signs indicated by the Angel, found the place. There they saw

fishermen preparing their nets for catching fish. Elpidiphorus said to these fishermen:

– We will pay you whatever you wish if, by the fortune of each of us, you cast your nets and give us whatever you catch.

The fishermen agreed and settled on a price. Elpidiphorus and the deacons cast lots as to whose fortune should be used to cast the first net. The lot fell to Theotimus. They cast the net, but caught nothing. Then they tried the fortune of Parthenius, and again without success. Then Elpidiphorus cried out:

– I command you to cast the net not in my name, but in the name of my God, and I hope in Him that the catch will not be fruitless.

When they began to draw up the net, the fishermen felt its weight and began to say to one another:

– The god of this man is more fortunate than other gods.

Having drawn in the net, the fishermen saw the body of the dead man, and now, on the contrary, they began to say that Elpidiphorus' catch was the most unlucky of all. They wished to cast the corpse back into the water, but Elpidiphorus and his companions objected and demanded that the fishermen give up the body for a worthy burial, and they took the agreed payment. The fishermen refused the money, saying that they had caught a corpse and not a fish, but at last, at Elpidiphorus' insistence, they accepted it. The body of the saint was carried to the shore, and the deacons and Elpidiphorus touched it with reverence and with tears of joy. They marvelled at the miracle, seeing that the head, which the executioner had severed from the body and cast separately into the sea, had returned to its place, and that the trace of the sword remained only as a scar upon the neck. A wondrous fragrance issued from the body of the martyr. The Christians wrapped the relics of the saint in clean burial garments, hired a chariot, conveyed them to Amaseia, and there, after lamenting over them, buried them honorably in the church he had built. Such was the martyrdom accomplished by St. Basil, Bishop of Amaseia.

Shortly after his death, the great Emperor Constantine, having learned from his sister's secret letters of the debauchery, apostasy and cruelty of Licinius, marched against him with a great army and, by the

help of God, defeated him. Licinius was taken alive captive and confined in Gaul, where he died an evil death. The whole East was delivered from the violence of the persecutors and served Christ God freely. Throughout the whole universe the glory of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit spread abroad, the One God in Trinity, to Whom be honor and worship from all, unto all ages. Amen.

Kontakion, Tone 4:

Having disregarded the king's command, thou didst receive the Kingdom of Heaven, O Basil; rejoicing therein, remember us who honor thy memory, O Hieromartyr.

* * *

Life of Our Holy Father Stephen, Bishop of Perm

Житие во святых отца нашего Стефана, епископа Пермского

Holy Stephen was born[8] in the town of Ustyug. His pious father Simeon, of Russian origin, was a reader at the Cathedral Church of the Mother of God. His wife Maria was likewise an exemplary Christian, in whose veins also ran Russian blood. To these excellent parents an excellent son was born, who from his earliest childhood brought them joy and admiration. Sent by them to study while still a little child, he, by reason of his lively memory, keen mind and outstanding diligence, absorbed his teaching with remarkable speed and rare steadfastness. Not even a year of his instruction had yet passed before he had already, by merit, been appointed canonarch and reader at the same church where his father served. Surpassing many relatives and strangers of his own age in his knowledge of Holy Scripture, he surpassed them still more by his virtuous life. He grew in virginity, purity, chastity and diligence, and avoided the company of the depraved and of those who spent their time in vain games and amusements. Many of the books of the Old and New Testaments which he read gave rise in his mind to the thought of the vanity of the present short life, which flows swiftly like a river and soon fades like the flower of the grass. At the

8. The year of his birth was, in all probability, 1340.

same time, the Sacred Books kindled in his heart a feeling of unquenchable love for God. Under the pressure of this dominant thought, he received the monastic tonsure from Hegumen Maximus in the Rostov Monastery of St. Gregory the Theologian. The monastery had a rich collection of books. Here Stephen lived a truly monastic life, at the same time satisfying his thirst for knowledge. Fasting, prayer, tears, repentance, humility, patience, meekness, obedience, love, and study of the Law of the Lord day and night—these were the virtues which adorned the newly tonsured monk. Besides this, he himself wrote many books, which to this day bear witness to his godly wisdom and diligence. For his virtuous life he was ordained deacon by Bishop Arsenius of Rostov[9], under whom his tonsure into monasticism had also been performed. Some years later, by order of Michael, called Mityai[10], ruler of the All-Russian Metropolis, he was ordained priest by Bishop Gerasimus of Kolomna.

The newly ordained hieromonk heard that the land of Perm, long under the authority of the Muscovite state, was not yet enlightened by holy Baptism and was wholly given over to idolatry. At the thought of so many human souls perishing in the darkness of ignorance of the true God, an unyielding desire seized St. Stephen to go to the Permians and save them from eternal perdition. But in order to pour into that darkness, in a worthy manner, the true light of the knowledge of God the Creator of the world, the new Apostle needed to translate the principal sacred books into the Permian tongue. Stephen thoroughly studied this language and composed a Permian alphabet[11]. Striving for a better understanding of Holy Scripture and for its most accurate rendering into Permian, the successor of the Apostolic mission also became well acquainted with the Greek language. He now acquired the ability to read

9. Arsenius I, who occupied the Rostov see from 1374 to 1380.

10. Mityai, the favourite priest and confessor of Grand Prince Demetrius Ivanovich, and then archimandrite of the Moscow Monastery of the Saviour, governed without consecration the all-Russian metropolis after the death of St. Alexis in 1378, and died in 1379 on the road to Constantinople, whither he had gone for consecration.

11. To compose this alphabet, he made use of the monetary signs of the Permians, which were cut on thin four-sided sticks.

the sacred books with full comprehension in three languages: Russian-Slavonic, Greek and Permian.

Knowing full well that a man can accomplish no good deed without the aid of God's grace, he long and tearfully besought God to bless his way.

As an obedient son of the Church, who undertakes no important matter without the permission of her spiritual authorities, St. Stephen went to Gerasimus, Bishop of Kolomna, then the locum tenens of the Russian Metropolis. Presenting himself before him, he disclosed to him his burning desire: either to convert the Permians[12] to Christ, or to suffer at their hands and lay down his life for our Savior, in fulfillment of the Apostolic words: "unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29). The bishop marvelled at his zeal for Christ and his desire for the salvation of human souls. Perceiving in him the calling of God and the working of the Holy Spirit, the bishop glorified the Lord Christ and blessed the blessed Stephen for the task that lay before him. At the same time he gave him particles of holy relics, antimensia, holy myrrh and everything necessary for the consecration of a church.

Having received the permission of the spiritual authority, Stephen, as a model citizen, took care to secure his undertaking by the lawful assistance of the civil authority, and obtained from the Grand Prince letters of protection.

Having made full preparation, Stephen set out on his journey. On arriving in the godless land of Perm, he offered diligent prayers to the Lord and began, like a sheep among wolves, to go about among the stubborn and depraved people and to teach them the Christian faith. Some, listening to his preaching, at first marvelled at this new teaching. Then, little by little, they began to know the truth, received the holy faith, were baptized and kept to the instructions of the preacher. Many, however, not only did not wish to hear him, but also caused him

12. The Permians, or Zyryane, are a people of the Finnic or Uralic class of the Turanian family. For the most part they are of middle height, strongly and well built, black-haired, with gray and dark-brown eyes. Courage, wit, patience, cunning, curiosity and inventiveness are their inseparable qualities. The last of these showed itself, among other things, in the numerous and varied methods of catching birds, beasts and fish.

a multitude of troubles. Some reviled him in every way. Others attacked him with clubs, intending to kill him. Still others wished to burn him. But the hand of the Lord protected His servant from murderous hands and from death, for the greater glorification of His holy name.

Having baptized and taught the Christian truths to a number of souls, he built for the little flock of Christ's rational sheep a comely church near the mouth of the River Vym, which flows into the great river Vychegda, where his monastery was afterwards founded. He dedicated the newly built church to the commemoration of the honorable and glorious Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos. By this dedication he expressed the thought that as the Annunciation was the beginning of our salvation, so the first church of Perm appeared at the beginning of the enlightenment of the land of Perm.

In this church he prayed day and night, with tears, to God for the conversion of the unbelievers, saying:

"Gather together, O Lord, Thy scattered people and erring sheep; bring them into Thy holy Church and number them with Thy chosen flock."

He himself incessantly taught them as an apostle, guiding them into the right path and beseeching them to turn away from their errors. But in proportion as he zealously sought to benefit their souls, they grew more and more angry with him.

Once, after praying to the Lord, Stephen went to the idol-house which they held in especial veneration and set it on fire. Since on this occasion none of the idol-worshippers was present there, it burned to the ground together with all the idols. The saint sat by the burnt building, awaiting what the unbelievers would do to him.

The latter, seeing that their precious idol-house was burning, hastened to it with axes and levers. Running up, they saw St. Stephen sitting near it, and in fury rushed upon him, surrounded him on every side, and wished to kill him.

The saint said nothing against them, but raised his hands in prayer and, preparing to die, cried out to God with tears:

"Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit; cover me with the wings of Thy goodness."

And suddenly the fury of the people, enraged to the utmost, was changed into the meekness of a lamb. The servant of God remained unharmed: no one wounded him or even struck him, partly because the people were overcome by the saint's meekness, partly from fear of the Muscovite government, lest they destroy a man who had come to them from Moscow with letters; but chiefly the pagans were restrained by the power of God, Who does not suffer the rod of the wicked to rest upon the lot of the righteous.

Then the blessed Stephen, standing in a conspicuous place, cried out, addressing the unbelieving people:

"How long, O men, will you not turn back from the seduction of the demons, that you may thereby escape condemnation and the eternal fire? Why do you worship idols and call them your gods, when they are the work of your own hands? They have mouths, yet they do not speak; they have ears, yet they hear nothing; they have eyes, yet they do not see. Their nostrils do not smell, their hands do not feel, their feet do not walk, and their throats do not cry out. They do not accept the sacrifices offered to them; they neither eat nor drink them. They help no one, for when fire burned them and reduced them to ashes, they could not even help themselves. If they are truly gods, why did they not quench the fire, why did they not escape the flame, why did they not speak a word of rebuke to the one who burned them and punish him in any way? Indeed, can an insensible tree do anything at all? Yet you bow down before them, the dumb, the blind, the deaf, the work of your hands. Understand the error that deceives you, and abandon this pernicious vanity. Come to know the One True God, in whom the Christians believe. Draw near to Him and be enlightened. For He established the heavens, founded the earth, sustains the existence of creation, and governs the whole world. He knows the need of each one. He is the Provider for all, Helper and Keeper, and there is no other God but Him. Therefore, men of Perm, brothers, fathers and children! Listen to me, who desire your good, and believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, whom I preach; I tell you the truth, that if you believe and are baptized, you will be saved and receive the Kingdom of Heaven. But if you do not believe and are not baptized, you will be condemned to eternal torment."

When St. Stephen taught in this way, adding to what he had said other exhortations, many were convinced, and beginning to believe, they came forward for baptism; and day by day the number of believers increased, and the Church of Christ grew in Perm.

As soon as the Venerable Stephen noticed pagans gathered somewhere, he at once drew near and, standing in the midst of the crowd, preached about Christ. Sometimes they themselves, together with their elders, their sorcerers, and all the most distinguished men of Perm, would gather and come to the Venerable for disputation about the faith, and they were always overcome by the words of piety that issued from the God-speaking lips of the preacher. The unbelieving Permians came especially often to the newly built church, not for saving prayer but out of a desire to look at the beauty of the church building and its inner splendor. Never having seen anything like it, they marvelled at the adornment of the holy temple, and as they left they said to one another:

"As we see, great is the Christian God, far greater than our gods."

At other times, when they gathered, they took counsel among themselves, saying:

"If we do not wound Stephen and drive him away from us, he will fill our whole land with his teaching and ruin the ancient temples and sacrificial places of our gods. We cannot contend with him in words, and there remains only to expel him from here by force."

Others objected:

"How can we beat him and drive him off, when he comes from Moscow and has letters?"

Some added:

"Even if he had been the first to enter the struggle, it would have been convenient for us to inflict wounds upon him during the fight. But he keeps to a crafty custom: he does not begin himself, but waits for us to begin the fight, so as to have grounds for a complaint against us in Moscow. If he dared to strike any one of us, we would at once tear him to pieces and could justify ourselves, for he would have been the first to attack us. But since he, in answer to our insults, does not speak an angry or reproachful word, bearing everything with patience, we do not know what to do with him."

Thus they took counsel many times, and, reaching no agreement, they went their separate ways; in this the word of the prophet was fulfilled: "Speak the word, and it shall not stand, for God is with us" (Is. 8:10).

And so the whole land of Perm was divided: some of its inhabitants were newly enlightened Christians, while others remained in the darkness of paganism, and the idolaters hated the faithful: they reviled them with abusive and reproachful words, caused them offense, and thereby disturbed their peace. Seeing that the believers suffered insults from the unbelievers, St. Stephen grieved greatly, and often by day and by night, with tears, he implored the Lover of mankind, God, to protect the newly gathered flock with His Divine covering, and to snatch the impious from the snares of the devil with His all-powerful right hand and lead them to the knowledge of the truth.

Hearing these unceasing tearful prayers of His servant, and seeing his labors and patience, the merciful God, who desires all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, was pleased to enlighten the land of Perm with the light of the holy faith. He sent to the Permian people a spirit of compunction, as once He had to those who heard the preaching of the Apostle Peter, of whom it is written in the Acts: "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

Thus a multitude of the Permian people, elders and young, great and small, gathered and said to one another:

"Do you see this man, brethren, who came from Russia? Have you heard his words? Have you noticed his patience? Have you understood his great love for us? See in what straits he dwells, and yet he does not leave here! How much he has borne from us in vexations, humiliations, and insults, and yet for all this he has not grown angry, nor has he said a single offensive word to anyone, leaving everything without reply. Having no malice toward us, he has struck no one, but bears everything with steadfastness, without great ill will; and more than that, he rejoices when we cause him offense, and at the same time he does not cease to speak to us of the Kingdom of Heaven, of eternal torment, and

of the recompense of each according to his deeds, always teaching us how to be delivered from torments and to receive the Kingdom. If what he speaks of were not true, he would not endure and labor so much! Truly he is the servant of the Great and Living God whom he preaches, who created heaven and earth and prepared the Kingdom for the good and torment for the wicked, and all his words are true!"

"Come, then, let us go to him and beg him to teach us perfectly his faith and make us Christians."

And men, women, and children went in great multitudes to the holy preacher.

The Venerable Stephen, seeing so many people coming to Christ God, rejoiced beyond words: shedding tears of joy, he offered inexpressible thanks to the Lord who loves mankind and does not desire the death of sinners. He received them with love, as a father receives his children, and opening his God-inspired lips, he taught them at length all the mysteries of the holy faith. God opened their minds to understand the teaching of the saint; they gladly accepted his words and asked him for baptism, and he baptized them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, by the grace of God and through the labors and prayers of the Venerable Stephen, the land of Perm was enlightened.

The newly enlightened destroyed their former idols, which stood in houses, villages, by the roads, in forests and groves, and they laid waste their shrines. The blessed Stephen himself labored especially in this; he went everywhere, hewing the idols down with an axe and burning them together with the offerings of the unbelievers.

It should be noted that the Perm pagans had a custom of offering their gods the pelts of animals caught in the hunt, namely sables, martens, ermines, weasels, beavers, foxes, bears, lynxes and others, and of hanging them on the idols. Besides this, they covered the idols on top with the finest linens and wrapped them in cloths. No one dared to take either kind of offering, for if anyone had presumed to touch any of them, he fell into a grievous illness: by the working of Satan he was convulsed and broken. St. Stephen, however, zealous for God and not fearing the power of demons, gathered everything offered as gifts to

the idols into one heap together with the idols he had hewn down, and burned them, reducing them to ashes. He himself took nothing of the gifts, and he did not permit any of the faithful to do so either, regarding the gifts as the portion of the devils. Only to his servant[13], Matthew, a Perm man newly enlightened, did he command that footcloths[14] be made from the idolatrous linens and cloths, for the dishonor of the pagan gods. The Permians were greatly and doubly astonished that the Venerable took nothing of the precious things for himself, but gave all to the fire, and that he suffered no harm from the demons. This strengthened them still more in faith in the power of Christ, which overcomes the power of the devils, and confirmed them in piety. St. Stephen, who overthrew a multitude of idols in various places, built two more churches, for every day the believers in Christ increased in great number, while the unbelievers grew fewer each day. The Perm enlightener established schools at the churches, gathering there young men, youths and small children; he taught them the Perm alphabet and reading from the Horologion, the Psalter and other books which he had translated into the Perm language, so as to prepare for the Permians priests, deacons and other clerics, and teachers, from their own tribe and tongue. Thus the holy Christian faith flourished and shone in Perm. During this activity of St. Stephen, directed toward establishing the newly enlightened in the faith, there came to him one sorcerer, or wizard[15], chief of enchanters and magicians; before their baptism the Permians revered him above all the sorcerers, honoring him as a father and teacher, who by his magical power governed the whole Perm land. He began to confuse the newly baptized, saying: "Men and brethren of Perm, why do you abandon your fathers' gods and faith? Why do you cease to offer sacrifices to them, as your fathers did? Whom are you listening to? Is it not a man who has come from Moscow? And can anything good come to us from Moscow? Is it not from there that heavy taxes are laid upon us, violence is done to us, and judges and chiefs are

13. That is, a servant.
14. By *onuchi* or *onuchki* is to be understood strips of linen, or of any cloth in general, wrapped around the legs in place of stockings.
15. This sorcerer was called Pama.

appointed? Do not listen, then, to this Russian, and moreover a Muscovite, a stranger. But listen to me, your own man, who desires your good. For I am of one tribe with you, from one country, and I speak the same language as you, and it is more fitting for you to listen to me, an old man and your father, than to this young man, who by his years might be my son or grandson."

In reply to this the newly enlightened said:

"Go and dispute with him, and not with us."

This sorcerer proved to be the fiercest opponent of the Venerable, and between them there blazed a great struggle; the sorcerer tried to destroy the Venerable by his sorcery: he summoned devils and worked enchantments, but without success: his incantations were destroyed, for the devils could not approach the servant of God. Yet the sorcerer, filled with malice, did not stop, continuing each day to cause annoyance to the Venerable: he openly reviled the holy Christian faith, thereby confusing those not yet established in the faith and drawing them back to their former impiety; some he seduced with words, others he won to his side with gifts. Often he came to dispute with the Venerable, during which, with abuse and reproaches, he tried in every way to vanquish the invincible warrior of Christ. Once he said to St. Stephen:

"Our gods, whom you blaspheme, have not destroyed you only through their mercy. Otherwise they would long since have crushed you or convulsed you. But they spare you through their kindness, so that you, knowing their good will, may cease to cause them offense. And that our faith is better than your Christian faith, I will prove to you clearly: you have one God, but we have many gods, helpers and protectors, and they give us everything that is in the waters—fish—and in the air—birds, in the forests and meadows—sables, martens, lynxes and other beasts, which from our hunting come even to you. Through them your princes, boyars and nobles grow rich, they dress and walk in them with proud dignity, give them to one another as gifts and trade with them, sending them to neighboring lands and to distant countries, to the Horde, to Greece, to the Germans and to Lithuania; and all this comes from our hunting, which our many gods send us. Our faith is far better than yours, and here is one more reason. With us one man or

two go out to fight a bear and kill it with the help of the gods, to whom they promise the skin in return. But with you, against one bear come out as many as a hundred or two hundred or more men, and so many can scarcely overcome one beast, and sometimes cannot at all, and, being themselves torn by it, they return from the hunt with nothing. And our faith is better than yours also because with us the events of the same day become known, even if they happen in a distant region, while with you it is not so, but only after many days do you receive any news. For all this our faith is better than yours."

Replying to this, St. Stephen said that the one Christian God is better than the many pagan gods, because they are not gods but devils, cast down from heaven into the abyss and seducing foolish people in lifeless idols. They not only do not help men, but on the contrary harm them and always strive to do evil; being evil, merciless, wrathful, full of fury, envious haters, they would be ready at once to destroy the human race, if the power of God did not bind and restrain them. As for every kind of hunting, it is given to men not by idols standing motionless in one place, nor by devils, who have no power at all over God's creation, but by that same Giver of all good things, God, who distributes His gifts to each according to his labors. And the fight with beasts takes place not only in Perm but in all lands and countries. The victory of man over beasts comes not by the help of your gods, but either by bodily strength or by the skill of the fighter; chiefly, however, it rests on this, that the heavenly God has subjected to man's feet all manner of beasts, cattle, birds and fish. And there were many Christians who by the name of Christ tamed fierce beasts, stopped the mouths of lions, bound bears and leopards[16] by a word, trod upon the asp[17], the basilisk[18] and every serpent.

And against the appeal to the news quickly reported to the sorcerers by their gods, the saint replied thus: in the Christian Church there have been many seers who beheld with their spiritual eyes, as if before them,

16. *Pard* is the same as the panther.
17. *Aspid* is a kind of very venomous serpent.
18. The basilisk is the most venomous of serpents, which, according to the accounts of the ancients, scorched with its breath.

not only what was happening far away, but also foretold what would come to pass many years after their death. So too the holy prophets of the Old Testament foretold many years in advance what afterwards came to pass in the New Testament Christian Church.

After long and repeated disputes about the faith, St. Stephen and the sorcerer came to the conclusion that it was better to test by deed on whose side the truth lay. By the sorcerer's choice they agreed on the following: to pass through fire and water, and whoever is not burned in the fire nor drowned in the water, his faith is the true one, and the people must follow him. This agreement pleased the whole Perm people, who had gathered to hear the dispute.

St. Stephen said to the sorcerer:

"You have desired what exceeds my humble powers, but I hope in the bounty and mercy of Almighty God, who seeks the salvation of all. For the glory of His holy Name He can wondrously preserve me alive and whole in fire and in water. Let the people standing here be confirmed in the faith by this miracle, and you shall be put to shame with your devils, in whom you put your hope."

Having said this to the sorcerer, St. Stephen turned to the people:

"Blessed is the Lord. Take fire, bring it here and kindle this hut standing apart, empty, with its entrance open; and I, taking the sorcerer by the hand, will enter it."

Then fire was brought and the building set alight. The Venerable Stephen, raising his hands to heaven, prayed to God with these words:

"O most merciful Master, 'Give us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man' (Ps. 59:13). Send forth Thy mercy, show Thy love for mankind, display Thy power, that those standing here may understand the true faith and know that Thou art the one true God, and I Thy servant: 'For lo, Thine enemies make a tumult, and they that hate Thee have lifted up the head' (Ps. 82:3), 'They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth' (Ps. 72:9). Therefore 'show me a token for good, that they who hate me may see it and be ashamed, because Thou, Lord, hast helped me and comforted me' (Ps. 85:17). Thou art the God who comforts us in all our affliction

by Thy Comforter, the Holy Spirit, with whom Thou art blessed unto ages, amen."

At the end of his prayer he said to the people:

"Peace be with you, brethren; be saved, ask and pray for me. For for the sake of the holy faith I am ready to die. I run to the struggle set before me, looking to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of the faith."

Turning to the sorcerer, he said to him:

"Let us go together, hand in hand, as we have agreed."

But the sorcerer, frightened by the torment of the intense, blazing fire, did not wish to go. Then the Venerable, seizing him firmly by his garment, dragged him with him into the fire by force. But he resisted, backed away, and, falling to the ground, cried out that he would be burned up at once in the fire, like hay and dry branches. Then the people, in vexation, began to shout at him that he should walk into the fire in accordance with his own proposal. But he begged them to leave him alone.

In answer to his entreaties, the Venerable Stephen said to him:

"Was it not you yourself who chose this and wished to test the Living God? Why, then, do you now refuse?"

The sorcerer, bowing down to the earth and falling at the feet of the Saint, spoke of his own powerlessness, and, acknowledging his guilt, exposed the vanity of his deception, and disclosed that, wishing to frighten St. Stephen, he had devised this manner of settling the dispute, being certain that the servant of the Living God would be afraid. But the sorcerer's schemes turned back upon his own head, and his wickedness fell upon his own crown (cf. Ps. 7:17). In the same way, the elder of the Perm sorcerers also declined to enter the water, although two ice-holes had already been prepared on the river: one upstream and the other downstream. It had been proposed that both should enter, holding hands, through one hole, and, passing beneath the ice, come out through the other. When St. Stephen urged the sorcerer to go with him into the hole, the latter refused. Thus the impotence of all his sorceries was revealed, and the falsehood of the teachings with which he had previously deceived people. After this, St. Stephen asked the sorcerer:

"Do you wish to believe and be baptized, since you have already been defeated?"

But he refused to accept the Christian faith and holy Baptism. Then the Saint said to the people:

"You are witnesses that this wretched man himself devised the means of determining the true faith by fire and water, and did not wish to fulfil his own word, being unwilling to go either into the fire or into the water. And even now he does not believe and does not ask for Baptism. What do you think of him? Tell me."

The people cried out:

"He deserves the death penalty!"

And, seizing him, they gave him into the hands of St. Stephen, that he might hand him over to whatever kind of death penalty he wished. At the same time they said:

"If you let him go alive, he will cause you still greater trouble."

But the Saint answered them:

"No, let not our hand be upon our enemy. Christ did not send me to strike, but to preach the Good News; He did not command me to torment, but to teach with gentleness and to admonish with calmness. Likewise my Master did not bid me to execute, but to chastise with mercy, according to the saying: 'Let the righteous man smite me: it is a kindness; let him rebuke me' (Ps. 140:5). And since he does not wish to believe, being hardened and blinded by malice, there awaits him an eternal punishment. For our Lord says: 'He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who does not believe shall be condemned' (Mk. 16:16)."

It is enough strictly to forbid him to corrupt God's people with his false teaching. Let him not dwell in the midst of Christ's flock. Let darkness not mingle with light, but let evil be cast out from the midst of all. Let the rotten limb be cut off with the sword of the Spirit, and let this wolf be driven out of these borders. If, however, he again dares to appear here and to teach, then he shall not escape the death penalty."

With such a prohibition the sorcerer was driven out of the Perm territories. And the Church of Christ abided in peace, and everywhere the

temples of God were built up, while the idol-shrines were utterly destroyed.

Soon the Church so increased in the Perm land that the believers were found to have need of a special bishop, the more so since, because of the great distance, it was very inconvenient to send candidates for the priesthood to the Moscow Metropolitan. Distant Perm is as far from Moscow as Moscow is from Constantinople.

The Venerable Stephen, after preliminary consultation with his flock, set out for Moscow to Grand Prince Demetrius Ivanovich and to Metropolitan Pimen. He reported to them all that had come to pass by the grace of God in the Perm land, and asked that a bishop be given to it, for "the harvest is plenteous, but the labourers are few" (Mt. 9:37).

The Grand Prince, the Metropolitan with the bishops, and the Sacred Council considered the petition of St. Stephen, and resolved to ordain him Bishop of Perm, as a man truly worthy of such honour.

"Who is most worthy and best fitted by his qualities for the episcopal service of the Perm land, if not he who enlightened this land with the grace of Christ, and bore in this such great labours and toils, translating the sacred books into the Perm tongue, overthrowing the idols and building churches, thus showing himself an Apostle to Perm?"

And St. Stephen was ordained[19] Bishop of Perm. This ordination greatly gladdened the Grand Prince, who had long known and loved St. Stephen. Having bestowed gifts upon the newly ordained bishop, the Grand Prince and the Metropolitan sent him back to Perm.

Returning to his newly established diocese, he brought great joy to the faithful. In the episcopal rank, St. Stephen laboured for the Perm Church as zealously as before: those who had turned to Christ he strengthened in the Orthodox faith; those who remained unbelieving he brought to faith and baptized; he raised up churches of God, ordained priests, and arranged the whole church order in the best manner. He also founded monasteries. He gave generous alms, feeding the poor and the needy, clothing the naked, comforting the sorrowful, and giving rest to wayfarers[20]. To all he was a merciful father, a great benefactor,

19. In 1383.

and a vigilant shepherd, concerned not only for the souls of his flock but also for their bodily needs: thus, during a severe famine in Perm, St. Stephen very often brought hither from Vologda, by barge, great quantities of bread and distributed it freely to the poor.

Thus the servant of God, Bishop Stephen of Perm, brought the whole Perm land to God. Governing the holy Church in good order, he provided all that was necessary for the rational flock entrusted to him. In these many years of labour, undertaken for the salvation of so many souls and which undermined his health, St. Stephen, having already attained a venerable old age, drew near to his end.

St. Stephen reposed in the time of Metropolitan Cyprian[21], in the days of Grand Prince Basil[22], son of Grand Prince Demetrius, who had made himself famous by his victory over Mamai.

At the close of his life it fell to him once more to set out for Moscow on account of certain church affairs. Before his departure for the capital, Stephen gathered his rational flock and instructed them from the Divine Scriptures to abide in faith and in unfeigned love among themselves. Feeling the approach of his death, he concluded his archpastoral instruction with these words:

"The time of my death is near, as our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom I entrust you, has revealed to me."

Having then offered a prayer, he set out on his journey. Upon arriving in Moscow, the Saint fell ill and, after suffering for several days, reposed[23] in the Lord, Whom he had loved from his earliest years.

At his solemn burial were present princes, boyars, the Metropolitan with all the clergy, and a multitude of people. All escorted his body with honour to the Monastery of the Holy Saviour, where the royal palace now stands. In the stone church of the monastery the relics of the servant of God were laid on the left side.[24]

The flock of Perm bitterly mourned the death of their bishop, who had also brought great joy to the Angels of God by turning so many

20. He also petitioned the boyar commanders for a reduction of taxes on the Permians, and freed them from the violence and bribes of the tiuns (judges) and of the officials in authority.
21. He was Metropolitan from 1375 to 1381, and again from 1383 to 1390.
22. Vasily Dmitrievich reigned from 1380 to 1425.
23. His death followed on 26 April 1396.

sinners' souls to the Lord. Therefore his holy soul was joyfully taken up by Angelic hands and borne with rejoicing to the throne of grace. Standing with the choir of holy hierarchs before the Lord, St. Stephen prays to Him not only for the Perm land but for the whole world.

Troparion, Tone 4:

With divine desire from thy youth wast thou inflamed, O wise Stephen; the yoke of Christ thou didst take up, and, sowing the divine seed in the hearts of the people, long ago hardened by unbelief, thou didst beget them spiritually according to the Gospel. Wherefore, honouring thy most glorious memory, we beseech thee: intercede with Him whom thou didst preach, that He may save our souls.

Kontakion, Tone 8:

Self-called, thou wast found, O hierarch, by those who sought thee not; thou didst free the people from the deceit of idols, didst lead them to the faith of Christ, and didst put to shame the sorcerer Pansotnik; wherefore thou wast also the first bishop and teacher of Perm. Therefore we, thy spiritual children, who by thee have been delivered from idols, cry out to thee in gratitude: Rejoice, Stephen, wise teacher!

* * *

Memory of the Holy Righteous Glaphyra

Память святой праведной Глафиры

The chaste maiden Glaphyra, full of the fear of God, was in the service of the wife of the emperor Licinius[25], Constantia. Learning of the impure intentions of the dissolute Licinius, she withdrew from Nicomedia[26] to Amasia[27], and here lived under the protection and safeguard of Bishop Basil. Summoned by Licinius to himself for punishment, she set out to him together with Bishop Basil, but on the way she died[28] and passed into the heavenly mansions.

24. His relics rest beneath the floor in the Savior church in the Kremlin, the church at Bor.
25. The Roman emperor Licinius reigned from 311 to 324.

* * *



26. Nicomedia is a city in the Asia Minor region of Bithynia, situated in the northeast corner of the gulf formed by the Sea of Marmara. Nicomedia was founded in 264 B.C. by the Bithynian king Nicomedes I, after whom it was named. Nicomedia was the favorite residence of the Roman emperors and their generals when they undertook campaigns in the East. At present the site of ancient Nicomedia is occupied by the small town of Ismid.
27. Amasia was situated in the northern part of Asia Minor, on the shore of the Black Sea.
28. The repose of St. Glaphyra followed about 322.

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF APRIL

April 27

27 апреля

New Calendar April 27 · Old Calendar May 10 (civil dates)

Commemoration of the Holy Apostle and Hieromartyr Simeon, Kinsman of the Lord

Память святого Апостола и священномученика Симеона, сродника Господня

St. Simeon, called the kinsman of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh, was the son of Cleophas, brother of St. Joseph the Betrothed, as the Greek church historians Eusebius[1], Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, George Cedrenus and Nicephorus, son of Callistus Xanthopoulos, unanimously testify. Joseph, betrothed to the Most Holy Theotokos, and Cleophas were of one father and mother; the first was the elder brother, the second the younger. When Joseph returned from Egypt, Cleophas married Joseph's daughter Mary. From this marriage was born St. Simeon, who, already in mature years, beholding the wonders of our Lord Jesus Christ, believed in Him. After the voluntary sufferings, resurrection and ascension into heaven of Jesus Christ, Simeon was numbered among the seventy holy Apostles and, together with the others, preached the teaching of Christ, passing from city to city, instructing and working miracles, enlightening the nations in the truths of the holy faith and convicting idol-worship. At that time the first Bishop of Jerusalem was St. James, brother of the Lord, son of Joseph the Betrothed. The impious Jews, for his glorification of Christ, threw him down from the parapet of the temple and killed him with a blow of a club to the head. Shortly after this murder, Titus, son of Vespasian, laid waste Jerusalem, as the Lord Himself had foretold. Gather-

1. Eusebius Pamphilus (283 – 340 A.D.), bishop, participant in the First Ecumenical Council. George Kedrenos, Byzantine writer of the late eleventh or early twelfth century. Nicephorus Xanthopoulos, Patriarch of Constantinople from 1350 to 1362.[1*]

ing after the devastation, the disciples of Christ who still remained alive and His kinsmen according to the flesh chose, in place of James, brother of God, as second Bishop of Jerusalem, Simeon, son of Cleophas, likewise a kinsman of Christ, grandson and at the same time nephew of Joseph the Betrothed. Jerusalem began to be inhabited again. St. Simeon occupied the Jerusalem see with honor, leading those who had gone astray to Christ.

After many years, in the reign of Trajan, certain heretics, out of envy, denounced to Atticus, the Roman governor, the supposed crimes of Simeon: that he was of the house of King David and that he confessed the Christian faith. For both of these there was at that time persecution on the part of the Roman emperors. The descendants of David were diligently sought out everywhere and put to death, so that no trace might remain of the royal Jewish line and the Roman emperors might forever hold the Jewish land. Believers in Christ were likewise tormented and killed, so that the whole universe would worship only the pagan gods. Therefore St. Simeon, both as a descendant of King David and as a follower and kinsman of Christ, already having reached the age of one hundred, was seized by the impious pagans at the command of the governor Atticus. After long tortures, the saint was, like our Lord Jesus Christ, nailed to the cross and gave up his soul to God.

Troparion, Tone 1:

We solemnly praise thee, Simeon, kinsman of Christ, hierarch and firm martyr, who didst destroy delusion and keep the faith.
Wherefore today, celebrating thy most holy memory, we receive the remission of sins through thy prayers.

Kontakion, Tone 4:

As a great star, the Church, having today the God-speaking
Simeon, is illumined, crying: Rejoice, honorable crown of martyrs.

* * *

Life of Our Holy Father Stephen, Bishop of Vladimir-Volhynia

Житие святого отца нашего Стефана, епископа Владимиро-Волынского

"He who is accustomed to patience," says the God-inspired Ephraim the Syrian[2], "strives for virtue, rejoices in sorrows, does not lose heart in calamity, and in time of affliction rejoices." Such was our Venerable Father Stephen, who suffered much from the brethren of the monastery. But if sorrow fell to his lot, God gave him great joy. Remembering the words of the prophet King David: "In the multitude of my sorrows within my heart, Thy consolations delight my soul" (Ps. 93:19), he counted all misfortunes as sent by God and endured them with joy. Passing through a long trial in the virtuous life, from childhood he was under the guidance of the praiseworthy hegumen, our Father Theodosius of the Caves, and was constantly his disciple, feeding with delight on God-inspired words from the honeyed lips of the teacher, as an infant from its mother's breast. As a worthy son, he was made like his virtuous mentor. Therefore Stephen became beloved of all the brethren, and was chosen by them as domestic, or overseer, for the observance of the church rule, and together with the hegumen himself, Venerable Theodosius, worthily instructed the brethren in church by his teachings.

When Venerable Theodosius was drawing near the end of this temporal life, all besought him to appoint Stephen as hegumen, as the most worthy of the brethren. The Venerable One heeded the entreaties of the brethren and, calling his beloved disciple, the blessed Stephen, entrusted him with the shepherding of the monks and besought him to complete the construction of the church, founded amid miraculous portents. Then, having given instruction to keep the monastic rule, to love the brethren from a pure heart, to turn constantly toward God in thought,

2. Ephraim the Syrian, one of the great teachers of the Church, who lived in the fourth century. Among his writings, the numerous "Homilies" of a moral, dogmatic and exegetical (interpretive) character are especially notable. St. Ephraim the Syrian also left behind many tender prayers and hymns. To him belong some hymns for the Nativity of Christ, as well as deeply moving stichera sung at funerals. Among the prayers composed by him, the tender Great Lent prayer is especially remarkable: "O Lord and Master of my life...". The memory of St. Ephraim is celebrated by the Church on January 28.

and not to forget strangers, the Venerable One departed to eternal life, promising, however, not to abandon the Caves monastery, entrusted to Stephen, with his help.

And so, after the repose of Venerable Theodosius, Stephen took upon himself the hegumenate of the Holy Caves Lavra and, fulfilling his ascetic labor, with particular zeal occupied himself with the building of the church begun by Venerable Theodosius and already marked by God's favor, and of the other monastery buildings.

By the grace of God, through the prayers of our Venerable Fathers Anthony and Theodosius, Stephen within a few years completed the church and a new monastery, into which he transferred the brethren from the old one. In the latter he left several monks, since there, according to custom, the departed monks were buried. Stephen established the rule that in the monastery the Divine Liturgy be celebrated daily in memory of the departed brethren and the blessed founders. God's mercy to the monastery did not fail, and upon this holy place the grace of God became ever more clearly manifest. But the enemy of all good and of the servants of God, the devil, hated the blessed hegumen for such care of the holy monastery, and by his evil machinations brought it about that some of the brethren raised a disturbance, and not only deposed Stephen from the hegumenate, to which they had unanimously elected him, but also, without any fault, expelled him from the monastery. Without malice Venerable Stephen endured everything from the brethren, and, separated from the monks, continued to love them. He prayed fervently for them, and, imitating Stephen the First-martyr, who bore his name, cried out:

"Lord, do not lay this to their charge!"

Like iron to a magnet, he irresistibly moved toward the resting place of Venerable Theodosius. Many boyars and noblemen, his spiritual children, entrusted to him by Venerable Theodosius, learning of the deep sorrow of their mentor, were moved to pity for the one who had suffered innocently, and diligently brought him all that was necessary. Then Venerable Stephen recalled those most glorious miracles of which he himself had been an eyewitness: how the masters from Constantinople came to the Venerable Anthony and Theodosius of the

Caves, brought an icon of the Most Holy Theotokos, and told of the vision of the empress that had occurred in the Blachernae church. And so, with God's help and through the prayers of the Venerable Fathers Anthony and Theodosius, the blessed Stephen built a monastery not far from the Caves Lavra at the Klov tract, and erected in it a stone church in the name of the Most Holy Theotokos, in memory of the laying up of her honorable robe, after the model of the Constantinopolitan Blachernae church. Each year the Venerable One solemnly celebrated the day of the second of July, and, gathering a numerous brotherhood, lived a God-pleasing life. The church rule and the whole monastic order he took over and commanded to be kept in accordance with the arrangement established by Venerable Theodosius in the Caves monastery.

Laboring much over his spiritual perfection, he acquired ever greater fame, so that even in the most distant regions he was known and glorified for his virtuous life. Therefore, when the bishop of the glorious city

of Vladimir, founded by Grand Prince Vladimir in honor of his own name, died, the Venerable Stephen was then chosen to the episcopal throne of that city and consecrated bishop by the most reverend John, Metropolitan of Kiev. He was a good shepherd of the sheep entrusted to him, showing his flock an example by word, virtuous life, love, lofty spirit, faith and purity.

When, by the compassion of God and at the thought of the Blessed John, Abbot of the Kiev Caves, they were preparing to transfer the honorable relics of our Venerable Father Theodosius from the cave into the church built according to God's direction, the most praiseworthy Bishop Stephen came from Vladimir to his monastery at Klov. At night, seeing a bright light above the cave across the field, he thought that the honorable relics of Venerable Theodosius were being transferred (he knew of the intention), and he grieved that the festivity was taking place without him. He at once mounted his horse and rode to the cave together with Clement, whom he had appointed after himself as abbot of the Klov monastery. As they drew near the cave they saw that the bright light they had seen from afar came from a multitude of burning candles; but when they rode up close, they saw nothing, and under-

stood that they had been granted to see the light of Divine glory issuing from the honorable relics of Venerable Theodosius: the earth above the relics had already been opened and the relics brought out to the mouth of the cave. On the day after this vision, among the other bishops who were carrying the honorable relics of their father and teacher, Venerable Theodosius, was also the Blessed Stephen. Returning to the episcopal throne of Vladimir, he zealously instructed his flock in the way of truth by his virtues, by which he earned for himself the unfading crown of glory. In order to receive this crown, foreshadowed by his name [3] and earned by his good deeds, he departed to Christ, the Chief Shepherd of all, in the year 1094 after the Nativity of Christ. By the prayers of the Venerable Stephen, the crown-bearer, grant us also, O Christ God, a crown of glory, to Thy own glory, with Thy unbeginning Father and co-essential Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

* * *



3. Stephen in Greek means "crown."

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF APRIL

April 28

28 апреля

New Calendar April 28 · Old Calendar May 11 (civil dates)

Commemoration of the Holy Apostles Jason and Sosipater, and of the Holy Virgin-Martyr Kerkyra

Память святых Апостолов Иасона и Сосипатра и святой мученицы Керкиры девы

The Holy Apostle Jason came from the city of Tarsus[1] and was the first Christian in that city; the Holy Apostle Sosipater was a native of Achaia[2]. Having joined the holy faith of Christ, they both became disciples of the Holy Apostle Paul, who in his Epistle to the Romans even calls them his kinsmen (Rom. 16:21). Jason was ordained bishop in his native city of Tarsus, while Sosipater took upon himself the leadership of the Church of Iconium; both of them valiantly shepherded and multiplied their flock. Journeying westward, they came to the island of Kerkyra[3], where they built a beautiful church in the name of the Holy First-Martyr Stephen, served the services in it, and joined many to the faith of Christ. Slandered before Kerkilinus, the king of the island, they were cast into prison, where seven robbers were also confined: Satornius, Iakiskhol, Faustianus, Iannuarius, Marsalius, Euphrasius and Mammius. The Holy Apostles, by their God-inspired discourses, drew these men to the holy faith and made sheep out of wolves. Then the king commanded that pitch, sulphur and wax be boiled in a cauldron and these seven newly enlightened prisoners be cast into it. Thus they died as martyrs and received crowns from the Lord. The jailer also believed in Christ. For this he had first his left hand cut off, then both his feet and finally, since he did not cease to call

1. A city in Asia Minor, as also Iconium.
2. Lies in Greece, in the northern part of the Peloponnesus.
3. An island in the Ionian Sea, near Greece.

upon the name of Christ, his head. And he was numbered among the company of the holy martyrs. As for the Holy Apostles Jason and Sosipater, the king led them out of the dungeon and delivered them to torment at the hands of Prince Kyprianus. He bound them firmly and sent them back to prison.

Seeing from her chambers the sufferings of the holy martyrs, and learning that they suffered for Christ, the king's daughter, named Kerkyra, declared herself a Christian, took off her precious garments and adornments, and distributed them to the poor.

Learning of this, her father was filled with deep sorrow and exerted every effort to turn her away from the faith of Christ. When all proved fruitless, the king, in violent rage, shut her up in a separate dungeon and ordered that she be given over to be defiled by a debauchee, Murinus. When Murinus approached the door of the prison, a bear suddenly ran up, seized him and began to tear him. Hearing the noise, and seeing through the window what was happening, the king's daughter, who was sitting in the prison, drove the beast away in the name of Christ, healed Murinus' wounds, and, having revealed the truths of the holy faith, made him a Christian.

"Great is the Christian God!" cried Murinus aloud, and for this, having endured dreadful torments, he died in agony and stood before the Lord in the company of the martyrs.

Then the king commanded the soldiers to surround the dungeon with firewood and set it alight, so that his daughter would burn together with the dungeon. They did as they were ordered, and the dungeon burned. But the maiden was found alive and unharmed: the fire did not touch her. Seeing such a miracle, many of the people believed in Christ.

At last the saint was hanged on a tree by her tormentors, choked by acrid smoke, shot with arrows, and gave up her spirit to God. After her death the king began to persecute those who believed in Christ. They, fearing torments, fled to a neighboring island and hid there. Learning of this, the king himself sailed to that island, intending to punish them with dreadful torments. But when he was on the open sea, pursued by the wrath of God, he drowned in the depths of the sea, as once Pharaoh did. The Christians, rid of this persecutor, offered thanksgiving hymns

to the Lord. The Holy Apostles Jason and Sosipater, freed from prison, taught the word of God to the people without hindrance.

When another king ascended the throne and learned of the Holy Apostles, he seized them and commanded that pitch, sulphur and wax be boiled in an iron cauldron and the saints be cast into it. But by the grace of Christ the Apostles stood unscorched in that cauldron, while many of the unbelievers standing around were burned by the fire. Others, seeing such a miracle, believed in Christ. The king himself also believed, and, putting a stone around his neck, he cried out with weeping:

"O God of Jason and Sosipater, have mercy on me!"

Then the Holy Apostles, gathering all who had believed, taught them the word of God, and, instructing the king, baptized him in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and gave him the name Sebastian. A few days later the king's son fell ill and died. Then the Holy Apostles, having prayed to God, raised him from the dead. They also performed many other miracles and, together with the king, built splendid churches. Having accomplished their holy labor and multiplied the flock of Christ, the Apostles, in advanced years, died and departed joyfully to Christ God.

Kontakion, Tone 4:

Ye appeared as most bright stars, illumining the whole universe with the light of preaching, O Divine Apostles Jason and Sosipater; save those who honor you in faith.

* * *

Sufferings of the Holy Martyrs Maximus, Dada and Quintilian

Страдание святых мучеников Максима, Дады и Квинтилиана

In the second year of the reign of the impious Roman emperors Diocletian and Maximian[4], under the governors Tarquinius and Gavinius, the devil poured out terrible wrath upon the Christians. From these emperors and governors went forth such a decree:

4. Diocletian reigned from 284 to 305, and Maximian (Galerius) from 306 to 311.

"Although we know that all our subjects devoutly honor the gods, yet, caring for the better ordering of the state, we ask and urge all who now live in the lands of the Roman empire to honor and love the gods with all their might themselves, and to strive to bring others to the same. If anyone is found who in any place mentions the name of Christ, he shall be subject to our wrath."

Hearing such an order, the peoples hastened, gathering together, to offer sacrifices to the gods according to the command, and to greet their rulers with such words:

"Joy and long life of health to our masters for such care for the honoring of the gods!"

The governor Tarquinius said to those assembled:

"Seeing such zeal on your part, we ask you to assemble tomorrow to offer sacrifices to the gods together; and now make merry with us and rest from the long road, and tomorrow, after the sacrifice, let each return to his own city." In the morning all gathered, held an abominable festival, offering sacrifices to the idols, and were dismissed by Tarquinius to their homes. On the following day one of the impious idolaters reported to Tarquinius:

"In the city there are three men who yesterday disobeyed your order and did not offer sacrifice, and they say of themselves that they worship the One God, who is in heaven."

Tarquinius at once sent his servants to seize the disobedient ones. Finding them in the village of Ozovia praying to God, the servants put them in chains and quickly brought them to the city of Dorostolum, where both governors happened at that time to be. It was already evening when they came into the city and reported the seized Christians. Tarquinius ordered the prisoners to be guarded until morning. The saints prayed all night and cried out:

"Our Lord, Jesus Christ! Send us Thy strength from heaven for help, that we may overcome our enemies, and by Thy goodness make us worthy to receive the crowns of victory."

In the morning Tarquinius and Gavinius sat in judgment and ordered the seized Christians to be set before them. Seeing them, Tarquinius asked:

"Are these the men who disregard our commands and presume to profess their faith?"

Then he asked the saints their names. Saint Maximus answered:

"In faith I am a Christian, as are these my brethren, and by my human name I am called Maximus."

"You declared," said the ruler, "that you serve not our gods but some other. What is your companion's name?"

He answered himself that his name was Dada, and that he too was a Christian, as was his brother. To Tarquinius' question as to what the third was called, Quintilian gave his name and declared that he too was a Christian. The secretary Magnilianus recorded the testimony of each. The governor Gavinius asked him whether he had written down the names. Magnilianus said that he would read them if he received the order.

"Read," said Gavinius. The secretary read:

"The names of the Christians standing before us, according to their testimony, are as follows: Maximus, Dada, Quintilian."

Then Tarquinius addressed the saints with these words:

"Your life is in your hands. If you wish to live, offer sacrifice to the mother of the gods and become her priests, for her priest has died and gone to the great heavenly king Zeus, to serve him there."

"Wicked and shameless man!" answered Maximus. "Do you not fear the Lord, calling a vile adulterer a god and naming him king? Know, foolish men, that the Heavenly King is Christ, who cares for all and governs all. Know also that we, the creation of the True God, will never fulfill your baneful command!"

The governor Gavinius summoned Dada and Quintilian and held a long conversation with them without success, urging them to acknowledge their own impious and pernicious teaching. The saints answered:

"We stand for the same thing our brother Maximus said. He is a reader in our Catholic Church, understands the Holy Scripture well, and knows what is profitable for us. But you, struck by demonic madness, do not know what is necessary for you. If you were willing to listen to us, you would see the light."

Then Gavinius and Tarquinius said:

"Behold, we exhort you in every way and advise what is better, and you do not submit and remain in your folly."

"No," answered Saint Maximus, "it is you who rave, wishing to turn into a demonic faith people who live virtuously and serve the One God. Do with us what you will, but you will never turn us away from the true faith."

Then Gavinius and Tarquinius began to take counsel as to what should be done with the saints, and they ordered that they be led away to prison. The saints went gladly, conversing about their salvation. While in prison they carried on spiritual conversation, and Maximus instructed Dada and Quintilian at length from Holy Scripture. At midnight they fell asleep and saw in a dream the devil coming against them in arms. Rising from sleep, they saw an Angel, who said to them:

"Fear not: God, your hope, will receive you unto Himself. He is not far from you, and He will help you."

The appearance of the Angel and his words strengthened the martyrs; they blessed God, glorifying Him until morning.

The governors, seated in judgment, ordered the prisoners brought before them again, and Gavinius said to them:

"We have summoned you; once more we exhort you to offer sacrifice to the gods, and then you shall receive from us no small honors. But if you do not obey us, you will be guilty of your own death. This night our gods, in a dream, declared their will concerning you."

The holy martyrs answered that God had likewise commanded them to endure all manner of torments for His holy Name. Tarquinius addressed Gavinius with these words:

"If we do not send them to torment, they will never obey us."

Gavinius answered:

"They themselves have chosen this; let them blame themselves."

Then the governors ordered the martyrs' garments removed. When this was done, Gavinius ordered them bound, stretched upon the ground, and beaten. When this too was done, Tarquinius said to the servants:

"Ask them whether they are willing to obey us and offer sacrifice to the gods; if not, we shall devise other tortures for them and destroy them with an evil death."

To the servants' questions the holy martyrs answered with one accord:

"Our God strengthens us; your tortures we disregard; your wicked counsel we will not heed, and we will not offer sacrifice to demons."

Tarquinius ordered the servants to lead the saints back to prison, since the hour of dinner had come. When the seventh hour had already passed, the governors again took their seats in judgment, and the holy martyrs were brought in once more.

Gavinius asked:

"Maximus! Have you not decided to heed our counsel and offer sacrifice to the gods?"

St. Maximus answered:

"We do not accept your counsel; as we said before, so we repeat now: we will worship only our Lord Jesus Christ together with God the Father and the Holy Spirit."

Gavinius, enraged, cried out:

"If you will not come to your senses and worship the gods, we will destroy you: we will order you led to a desert place and there beheaded."

The saints besought the governors to carry out the threat. Then the governors commanded that the martyrs be led to their village and beheaded there. Hearing the sentence of death, the saints glorified God and prayed:

"Lord Jesus Christ, who hast delivered us from this sinful earthly life, receive us into Thy chamber and make us worthy of Thy Heavenly Kingdom."

The holy martyrs Maximus, Dada, and Quintilian, while praying, were brought to the village of Ozovia, where their heads were cut off, and gave up their spirits into the hands of God on the 28th day of April, in the reign of Diocletian and Maximian, under the governors Tarquinius and Gavinius. To our Lord Jesus Christ, who reigns over us, be glory, dominion and kingdom for all ages. Amen.

* * *

Memory of our Holy Father Cyril, Bishop of Turov

Память во святых отца нашего Кирилла, епископа Туровского

The Blessed Cyril was the son of wealthy parents, and was born and raised in the city of Turov[5]. Not loving the riches and glory of this corruptible world, he devoted himself with especial zeal to the study of the Divine Books, and became thoroughly learned in Holy Scripture. When the time came, he went to a monastery[6]. Having received monastic tonsure, he served God more than all the monks, wearing down his body by fasting and vigil, and through this made himself a pure dwelling of the Holy Spirit. At this time he benefited many by teaching, and by his example encouraging the monks to remain in obedience and submission to the abbot, to honor him as God, and to obey him in all things; he said that a monk who does not keep obedience to his abbot in accordance with his vow cannot be saved. Then, striving toward more perfect ascetic labors, the Blessed Cyril shut himself up in a pillar, where he remained for some time, struggling in fasting and prayer. There he composed many pious writings, by which he acquired renown throughout the whole surrounding country. At the earnest request of the prince[7] and the citizens of the city, the Metropolitan raised him to the episcopal rank and appointed him Bishop of the city of Turov[8], which at that time bore this name and lay near Kiev.

In the episcopal rank the Blessed Cyril valiantly labored in the governance of the Church of God. On the basis of Holy Scripture, he exposed the heresy of Theodorets[9], so called in derision, and delivered him to anathema[10]. He wrote many epistles, based on the words of the Gospel and the prophetic books, and also to Prince Andrew Bogolyub-

5. The city of Turov, now a small town in the Minsk province, Mozyr district, lay on the river Tiripeti, midway between the present towns of Mozyr and Pinsk. According to the chronicle it was founded by the Varangian Tur, who in the reign of Olga or Sviatoslav came from across the sea together with another Varangian, Rogvold, who founded the Principality of Polotsk.
6. The Blessed Cyril labored in the Monastery of Boris and Gleb, which lay near Turov. This monastery is mentioned in the Life of the Blessed Martin. His memory is celebrated on June 28.
7. Here is meant Prince Yaroslav Georgievich or Yaroslavich, who ruled in Turov from 1146.
8. The year of the Blessed Cyril's accession to the see is unknown.

sky[11] he sent instructions composed by him for the Lord's feasts, and many other of his soul-profitable writings. Having written all this, and composed a multitude of other works, the Blessed Cyril spread them among his flock. Through his labors Orthodox Russian people make use of them even to this day, enlightening and comforting themselves[12]. Having spent his life in such pious labors, and having worthily governed the flock entrusted to him, the Blessed Cyril passed into the eternal rest of endless life[13].

Come now, brethren, let us glorify this hierarch with such words: Rejoice, glorious hierarch and teacher, who above all others has gained for himself the glory of a second Chrysostom in Russia. Rejoice, thou who by thy shining word hast instructed all the lands of the Russian land in spiritual wisdom. Offering thee this small praise, we pray to thee: pray to the Almighty, before Whom thou now standest with boldness, that He may deliver us from the calamities that have befallen us and from the godless Agarenes[14] who always oppress us, that through thy prayers we may receive from the Lord mercy, forgiveness of sins, and eternal blessedness in the life to come.

On the same day the memory of the holy martyrs: Satornius, Iakisholas, Faustian, Ianuarius, Marsalius, Euphrasius, Mammius (robbers, enlightened in prison by the Apostles Jason and Sosipater,

9. Under the name Theodorets is meant here the favorite of Prince Andrew Bogolyubsky, Theodore, at first abbot of Suzdal and then Bishop of Rostov, who committed various wickednesses and was executed about 1169. In the Novgorod chronicle he is called "the White Hood" for his self-willed wearing of a white klobuk instead of a black one.

10. Holy Hierarch Cyril was present at the council of 1169, at which Theodorets was tried and condemned as a heretic and evildoer, and together with the other bishops took part in his condemnation.

11. It is thought that these epistles also concerned the matter of Theodorets, but none of these epistles is known.

12. Of the writings of the Blessed Cyril there have come down to us: nine sermons delivered in the church before the people, three articles set forth in the form of epistles or instructions to monks, and more than twenty prayers and a canon of supplication. The authenticity of these writings is beyond doubt.

13. The Blessed Cyril died about 1183, having left the see before that year out of love for the solitary life.

14. The Tatars are meant. The synaxarion commemoration of the Blessed Cyril was certainly composed in the time of Tatar domination over Rus. This memorial, from a manuscript Prologue of the fourteenth century, first entered the printed Prologue in the editions of 1642 and 1643.

thrown into a cauldron of boiling pitch), Zeno, Eusebius, Neon and Vitalis (enlightened by the same Apostles and burned); all these martyrs suffered on the island of Corcyra.

* * *



THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF APRIL

April 29

29 апреля

New Calendar April 29 · Old Calendar May 12 (civil dates)

Memory of the Holy Nine Martyrs Who Suffered at Cyzicus

Память святых девяти мучеников, в Кизике пострадавших

The city of Cyzicus lies in the Asia Minor region of Mysia, on the shore of the Dardanelles Strait[1], which separates Asia from Europe. It stands near the city of Troas, in which the holy Apostle Paul, teacher of the Gentiles[2], preached, and it was enlightened with the holy Christian faith by the same Apostle. Although this city was illumined with the light of Christianity, at first it had not very many Christians, because of the persecution of the Christian faith by the pagans. When the impious Roman emperors who reigned before Constantine the Great sent out dread edicts throughout all lands, compelling everyone who confessed the name of Christ to worship idols, and sent cruel governors for this purpose, charged with putting to death by various means all who did not obey the imperial command, then many Christians fled from the city, wandering over mountains and deserts; others lived among the pagans but concealed their faith from them; and those who loved their God and Lord, Jesus Christ, especially ardently openly confessed the name of Christ before all, in the midst of the pagans, and gladly went to manifold torments and death for the name of Christ. To the number of these last belong also the nine holy martyrs whom we commemorate today, valiant men, steadfast in the

1. The Dardanelles Strait (in antiquity the Hellespont) joins the seas: the Sea of Marmara and the Aegean Sea.

2. The title "teacher of the tongues" (or of the Gentiles) is applied to the holy Apostle Paul because he preached chiefly to the Gentiles, while the Apostle Peter preached chiefly to the Jews. – The memory of the holy first-enthroned Apostles Peter and Paul is on June 29.

holy faith as Mount Zion[3], and burning with zeal for God like Elijah. Their names are as follows: Theognius, Rufus, Antipater, Theostichus, Artemas, Magnus, Theodotus, Thaumasius and Philemon.

These holy martyrs came from different cities. Gathering together in Cyzicus, they, not fearing either the dread imperial commands or torments and death, loudly glorified Christ, boldly confessing that He is the True God, the Creator and Almighty of the whole world. At the same time they reproved and condemned the impious teaching of the pagan idolaters, who, instead of God, honored demons; instead of worshipping the Creator of the whole world, worshipped a creature; instead of the Living God, worshipped lifeless idols; instead of the True God, honored false gods; and instead of love for the merciful God, who grants men every good, offered sacrifices to the cruel-hearted demons, the tormentors of men. Therefore these holy martyrs exhorted the pagans blinded by unbelief to abandon their errors and come to know the truth, so that, enlightened by the light of the Christian teaching, they might believe in the One True God, who dwells in heaven and holds the whole universe in His power.

Learning of such bold preaching by the saints, the impious servants of the devil seized them without mercy, like wolves seizing sheep, and, binding them, brought them for interrogation before the governor of the city, as if they were some malefactors.

The holy soldiers of Christ stood boldly before the impious judge. Their hearts were kindled with the fire of love for God and zeal for His glory. Standing before the tormentor, they clothed themselves in the whole armor of God (cf. Eph. 6:11), so as to stand valiantly against the impious judge, and still more against the prince of darkness himself, with whom they now went out to struggle.

The impious judge subjected them to various torments and tortures; more than once he confined them in prison, then brought them out again and delivered them to agonies, demanding that they renounce

3. Zion is the high southwestern part of Jerusalem. Here in Old Testament times a fortress was built which protected Jerusalem. In Holy Scripture Zion is often presented as, as it were, the dwelling of God Himself and in general as a stronghold, a bulwark of Israel (Ps. 73:2, 75:3, 98:2, 109:2, 145:10, etc.).

Christ and offer sacrifice to the idols. But the valiant soldiers of Christ in no case consented to renounce Christ, their God and Lord; on the contrary, they began to speak of the vanity of idolatry and reproved the judge himself for impiety. As a result, after many other various sufferings, they were beheaded. Near that place their bodies were also buried.

Some years after this, Constantine the Great came to the throne, who, having received holy baptism, ended the persecution of the Christians. The light of Christian piety now spread everywhere throughout the universe.

Then the Christians of Cyzicus, with reverence, took up from the earth the bodies of the holy martyrs, which proved to be incorrupt, then laid them in new coffins, built a church in honor of the holy martyrs, and with reverence transferred into it their precious treasure.

From these holy relics many wonders and healings took place: demons were cast out, the paralyzed became whole, and those suffering from fever were completely cured of their illnesses.

Thus, for example, a certain man well known in the city, who suffered from dropsy, was healed of his illness by touching with faith the reliquary containing the holy relics. Likewise, whoever, whatever illness he had, touched with faith the tomb of the holy martyrs was immediately granted healing.

Seeing this, many of the unbelievers turned to Christ, so that soon the whole of that city believed in Christ; idols and pagan temples were destroyed, and in their place Christian churches were raised; piety flourished in the city of Cyzicus through the prayers of the holy nine martyrs who rested there.

When, after the death of the pious Emperor Constantine and his son Constantius[4], who reigned for a rather long time, the impious Julian the Apostate[5] came to the throne, some of the Hellene pagans residing in that city went to this emperor and denounced the Christians to him,

4. Constantius governed the eastern half of the Roman Empire from 337 to 363. The western half of the empire was governed at this time by Constans (from 337 to 350) and Magnentius (from 350 to 353). From 353 to 361 Constantius already governed both halves of the Roman Empire.

5. Julian the Apostate governed the Roman Empire from 361 to 363.

saying that they had destroyed all their temples and smashed their altars.

Hearing this, the emperor, although he commanded that the pagan temples and idols be restored, nevertheless did not permit any oppression of the Christians living in the city, since they were very numerous (for which reason he feared a popular uprising). However, this impious emperor ordered the Christian bishop Eleusius to be thrown into prison. When he set out on campaign against the Persians and perished there, Bishop Eleusius was released, and once again the light of the faith of Christ shone in the city of Cyzicus; that city was strengthened and established, as by a firm wall, through the zealous intercession before God of those holy martyrs. By their prayers may we too receive healing from our illnesses, both spiritual and bodily, and may we also be granted grace and mercy from our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Kontakion, Tone 2:

Nine steadfast and all-radiant martyrs, confessors of the Tri-solar Godhead, cried out first to Him at the judgment seat: "Our blood and souls with our bodies we offer to Thee, O Master, as a blameless sacrifice; number us among Thy heavenly ones, as the merciful God."

* * *

Memory of Our Venerable Father Memnon the Wonderworker

Память преподобного отца нашего Мемнона чудотворца

Our Venerable Father Memnon from his youth dedicated himself to the service of God and became a pure dwelling of the Holy Spirit, for he subdued his flesh to the spirit, putting to death the passions of the body by many and grievous labors. The holy Memnon was appointed superior over the monks (hegumen). Because of his angel-like life, he received from God an abundant gift of working miracles; he healed incurable sick and also wrought many other wonders. Thus, for example, at his prayer a spring of water appeared in a dry place; very

often he delivered from drowning ships overtaken by strong sea waves and already sinking; he drove away locusts that had flown in great multitudes into that land and were devouring all the fruits and grasses; and he performed many other glorious miracles, for which he was named "the Wonderworker."

Thus, for many years struggling in asceticism and pleasing God by his virtuous life, Memnon departed, rejoicing, to the Lord, whom he loved with all his heart.

Not only during his life but also after his death the saint wrought manifold miracles, for healings were granted to the sick from his tomb, and by the mere calling upon the name of the saint the locusts were driven away and all the snares of the unclean spirit were destroyed. Thus God glorified His servant, Who is glorified in His saints forever. Amen.

On the same day is the memory of the holy martyrs Diodorus and Rhodopian the deacon, who suffered under Diocletian at Aphrodisias in Caria.

ALSO COMMEMORATED THIS DAY

On the same day is the memory of the holy martyrs Diodorus and Rhodopian the deacon, who suffered under Diocletian at Aphrodisias in Caria.



THE THIRTIETH DAY OF APRIL

April 30

30 апреля

New Calendar April 30 · Old Calendar May 13 (civil dates)

Memory of the Holy Apostle James, Son of Zebedee

Память святого Апостола Иакова Зеведеева

Saint James, son of Zebedee and brother of the Holy Evangelist John the Theologian, was one of the twelve Apostles whom the Lord chose as His disciples from among simple fishermen. Called by Jesus Christ, James, together with his brother, left the boat, his father and the fishing nets, and went after Christ (Mt. 4:21–22), following Him everywhere, listening to His words and beholding the miracles He performed. And the Lord so loved both brothers that He allowed the one to lie upon His breast (Jn. 13:23), and promised the other (James) that he would drink the cup which He Himself was to drink (Mt. 20:22–23). And the Apostles themselves so greatly loved their Lord and showed such devotion to Him that they wished to call down fire from heaven upon those who did not believe in Him, to destroy them (Lk. 9:54); and they would have done so, had not the merciful Lord Jesus Christ Himself forbidden them. To these two Apostles, James the son of Zebedee and John, as well as to the Apostle Peter, the Lord revealed above all the other Apostles His Divine attributes and His mysteries, as was the case, for example, on Tabor, when the Lord, desiring to show the glory of His Divinity, took with Him Peter, James and John (Mt. 17 ff.).

After the voluntary suffering, resurrection and ascension of our Lord, and after the sending down of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Apostle James travelled through Spain and other countries preaching the word of God. Then he returned again to Jerusalem and was terrible to the Jews as thunder (Mk. 3:17), for he boldly and fearlessly preached Je-

sus Christ, saying that He is the true Messiah, the Savior of the world. James overcame in disputes the Pharisees[1] and the scribes[2], rebuking and reproaching them for their hardness of heart and unbelief. They, being unable to withstand him, hired for money a certain sorcerer named Hermogenes against him, that he might enter into dispute with James and put him to shame. But the sorcerer, being proud, did not wish to converse with James himself, but sent his disciple, named Philetus, saying:

"James will not be able to overcome in argument not only me myself, but even my disciple."

Philetus came and conversed with the Holy Apostle James, but being unable to resist the wisdom of the Holy Spirit with which the Apostle was filled, he remained silent like a mute and could not at all open his mouth to answer the Apostle. Having come to know the truth, Philetus humbled himself and, returning to his teacher the sorcerer, declared to him that James could not be overcome, since he confirmed his words even by miracles. At the same time Philetus advised his teacher to abandon his false wisdom and sorcery and to become himself a disciple of James. But the proud Hermogenes, by his spells, summoned demons and commanded them to hold Philetus bound in one place so that he could not move from it, and said at the same time:

"Let us see how your James will deliver you."

Philetus, however, secretly sent word to the Apostle that he had been bound by demons through the spells of Hermogenes. Learning of this, the Apostle sent him his towel, telling him to take the towel sent to him and to pronounce these words: "The Lord looseth the prisoners; the Lord openeth the eyes of the blind; the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down" (Ps. 145:7–8).

No sooner had Philetus uttered these words than he was immediately freed from the invisible bonds, for the demons, terrified by the Apostle's towel and by the power of the words spoken, left Philetus and

1. The Pharisees were a religious sect that arose in Palestine two or three centuries before Christ. The sect set as its aim the exact observance, often reaching to pettiness and scrupulosity, of all the ritual prescriptions of the Law of Moses.
2. A popular teacher, a rabbi.

fled from him. Then Philetus, mocking Hermogenes, came to the Holy James and, being instructed by him in the holy faith, was baptized.

Hermogenes, however, filled with great fury and wrath, adjured the demons that served him to bring James and Philetus to him bound. But when the demons approached the dwelling in which the Holy James was staying with Philetus, at once the Angel of the Lord, by God's command, seized those demons, bound them with invisible bonds and began to torment them. The demons, tormented by the power of God, cried out aloud to all:

"James, Apostle of Christ, be merciful to us, for at Hermogenes' command we came to bind you and Philetus, and now we ourselves are tightly bound and suffer cruelly."

The Holy James said to the demons:

"May the Angel of God who bound you release you from your bonds; and go and bring Hermogenes here to me, without doing him any harm."

At once the demons, released from their bonds, went to Hermogenes and, seizing him, in the twinkling of an eye set him, bound, before the Apostle, and begged the Apostle to allow them to avenge their wrongs upon Hermogenes.

The Apostle, however, asked the demons why they had not bound Philetus, as Hermogenes had commanded them to do. The demons answered:

"We cannot even touch a fly in your house."

Then the Apostle said to Philetus:

"Our Lord commanded us to repay evil with good; therefore you too release Hermogenes and deliver him from the demons."

After this the Apostle said to Hermogenes, who had been freed from the demonic bonds:

"Our Lord does not desire servants by compulsion, but desires willing servants; therefore go wherever you wish."

But Hermogenes said:

"As soon as I leave your house, the demons will at once kill me, for I know how great is their fury; I know also that it is impossible for me to be delivered from them unless you protect me."

Then the Apostle gave him into his hands his staff, which he used on his journeys. Hermogenes went with that staff to his house, and on the way he suffered no harm from the demons. Thus coming to know the power of Christ and seeing the weakness of the demons, Hermogenes gathered all his magical books, brought them to the Holy James and, falling at his feet, cried out:

"True servant of the True God, who delivers the souls of men from perdition. Have mercy on me too, and receive your enemy as a disciple!"

Instructed by James in the holy faith, Hermogenes received baptism, at the Apostle's command burned his magical books, and became a true servant of Christ, so that he worked miracles in the name of Jesus Christ.

The Jews, seeing all that had happened, fell into great fury and persuaded King Herod[3] to raise a persecution against the Church of Christ and to put James to death: "Herod stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also (then were the days of unleavened bread), and when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison" (Acts 12:1–4).

Eusebius[4], Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, relating concerning Saint James, writes that when he had been condemned to death by Herod, a certain man named Josias, one of those who had informed Herod against the Apostle, seeing the courage and boldness of Saint James and perceiving his innocence and holiness, as well as the truth of his words (concerning the coming of the Messiah, Christ), believed in Christ and became a confessor of Christ. At once he too, together with the Holy Apostle James, was condemned to death. As they went together to the place of execution, they met on the way a paralytic lying by the road, and the Holy Apostle healed him. When they bowed their heads for beheading, Josias begged Saint James to forgive him the sin he had committed through ignorance, namely that he had informed on

3. Herod Agrippa I is meant here, son of Aristobulus and grandson of Herod the Great, who governed Judea from 40 to 44 A.D.

4. Eusebius Pamphili was the most famous church historian, who lived from 268 to 340 A.D. His *Church History* is brought down to 324 A.D.

him to the king. The Apostle, embracing and kissing him, said: "Peace be with you," and the two of them, bowing their heads for beheading, died together[5].

After their beheading, the disciples of the Holy Apostle James took his body and, by Divine providence, carried it to Spain[6], where even now healings are dispensed to the sick from his tomb and miracles are wrought to the glory of Christ God, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit is glorified by all creation unto ages of ages. Amen.

Troparion, Tone 3:

Thou wast the chosen Apostle of Christ, and the only brother of the beloved Theologian; O all-praised James, intercede that our transgressions be forgiven, and that great mercy be granted to our souls.

Kontakion, Tone 2:

Having heard the divine voice calling thee, thou didst disdain thy father's love and didst hasten to Christ, O glorious James, together with thy kinsman, with whom thou wast vouchsafed to behold the divine Transfiguration of the Lord.

* * *

Memory of Our Holy Father Donatus, Bishop

Память во святых отца нашего Доната епископа

Saint Donatus lived in the reign of the pious emperor Theodosius the Great[7] and was bishop in the city of Evria, which was situated in ancient Epirus[8]. Near this city there was a place called Soria, on

5. The repose of the holy Apostle James took place about 42 A.D.
6. The relics of the holy Apostle James are at present in Compostela, the principal city of the Spanish kingdom of Galicia; they were brought there at the beginning of the ninth century.
7. Theodosius I the Great, Roman emperor, reigned from 379 to 395 A.D.
8. The Greeks originally used the word "Epirus" to mean the mainland (dry land) in general, in contrast to the islands; in particular, the inhabitants of the western Greek islands (in the Ionian and Adriatic seas) called by this name the opposite shore of Hellas, before the entrance to the Gulf of Corinth. Later the boundaries of Epirus narrowed, and the name Epirus came to denote the region bordering on Illyria to the north, on Thessaly to the east, and on Aetolia and Acarnania to the south.

which there was a spring of water; if anyone drank water from this spring, he at once died in dreadful torments. The Holy Bishop Donatus, learning of this, went to that spring with his clergy.

When he was already near the spring, a loud thunder was heard, and from the spring there came out a large and terrible serpent. The serpent made toward the servant of God and tried to strike the legs of the mule on which the hierarch was riding with its tail. Then Bishop Donatus struck the approaching serpent across the back with the whip with which he was driving his mule, and at once the serpent died. The clergy and people present with the bishop, seeing such a miracle, gathered firewood and, laying a great pyre, burned the serpent on it, so that its corpse would not rot and poison the air with its venom, all the more since the serpent was very large; yet still no one dared to drink the water of that spring. Then Saint Donatus, after prayer, blessed the spring, and first himself drew water and drank it, and then commanded everyone to drink it without fear. All the people, after this, drank the water without doing themselves any harm, and, glorifying God, returned to their dwellings.

Once St. Donatus happened to be in a rocky and waterless place, and seeing that the people around him were fainting from thirst in the great heat, he dug a small trench with his own hands and prayed to God for the sending of water. At once a spring of water began to flow, and it flows abundantly to this day.

On another occasion St. Donatus, by his prayer, brought down water from heaven. In a time of drought and the severe dryness that came of it, he prayed to the Lord, and at once a heavy rain fell which watered the earth, so that in that year there was an abundant harvest of fruits, through the prayers of the saint.

It happened that the daughter of the Emperor Theodosius fell very seriously ill, being tormented by an unclean spirit. The Emperor and the Empress were in great sorrow on account of their daughter's sickness, since she was their only daughter. At that time they heard that Bishop Donatus performed miracles. At once the Emperor sent an order to Epirus that all the bishops of that land should come to him for his blessing. When the Epirote bishops arrived at Constantinople,[9] the Emperor received them with honor and kindness and asked:

"Which of you is Bishop Donatus, who slew a serpent with a scourge, brought water out of rocky ground, and obtained rain from heaven by prayer to God?"

The emperor was shown St. Donatus. The emperor kissed him and led him to the empress, and they both, falling at the saint's feet, implored him to help them, saying:

"Servant of God! Show us mercy: we have one daughter, and she suffers grievously, tormented by a demon. We grieve deeply for her; we have brought many physicians and priests to her, and none could help her. Therefore we, hearing of the great grace of God that dwells in you, have dared to ask you to come here, that by your prayers, which are effective before God, you may cast the demon out of our daughter. If you heal our daughter, you shall receive half of her property."

The saint answered the request of the emperor and the empress thus:

"Where is the maiden? Show her to me."

Donatus was brought to the maiden. At once the demon, unable to endure the presence of the servant of God, cried out and, throwing the maiden down upon the ground, came out of her; from that time the maiden was in health. The emperor and the empress rejoiced greatly at their daughter's recovery and offered the saint great gifts, but he would take nothing of what was offered him. Seeing the good conduct and

9. Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire. Constantinople was founded under the name "Byzantium" by the Megarians in 658 B.C. on the European side of the Bosphorus strait, which connects the Black Sea with the Sea of Marmara. Its dominant position on the sea and favorably developing historical conditions made Byzantium a remarkable center, in antiquity, of both commercial and general cultural life. In church history Constantinople is known as the place of several Ecumenical and many local councils.

piety of the imperial couple, he asked them that there be given to him, in his episcopate, one place near a village called Omphalia, so that he might build a church on that site. The emperor at once granted the saint's request and confirmed his gift by an imperial document.

While the saint was at Constantinople, it happened that a certain man died there who had a creditor to whom he had not repaid his debt. When he was being carried to burial, his creditor, holding the dead man's note, detained the coffin and did not allow the dead man to be buried until the debt, which amounted to two hundred gold coins, was paid to him. St. Donatus, who was at that time near the house of this dead man, hearing the wailing and loud noise caused by the great crowd of people, said to the bishops who were with him:

"Let us go and beg the creditor to permit the body of his debtor to be given to burial."

But the bishops did not agree to go.

Then Donatus went alone. When the widow of the dead man saw the saint, she fell at his feet and, with tears, implored him:

"Have mercy upon me, man of God, for I have fallen into a twofold misfortune: I have lost my husband and cannot bury his body, for the creditor prevents it. Persuade him, holy man, that he permit me to lay the body of the dead in the earth."

The saint asked the woman:

"Is it truly known for certain that your husband owed this man?"

The woman answered:

"My lord! A few days before this time my husband told me that he had already paid his debt, but only his note remained with the creditor."

Then the hierarch of Christ said to the creditor:

"Permit, child, the body of the dead man to be given to burial; your debt shall be repaid to you afterwards."

But the creditor, being a cruel and unjust man, not only did not obey the saint but even reviled him.

Then the holy bishop, approaching the bier on which the dead man lay, and touching the corpse with his hand, cried out loudly to him:

"Hear me, man!"

At once the dead man came to life, and opening his eyes, said:

"Here I am, master!"

The saint said to him:

"Rise and tell us how to deal with your creditor, who will not permit you to be buried, saying that you did not repay him the debt, for which he holds your note."

The dead man rose and sat up, to the great terror of all who were present at this wondrous sight. Looking sternly at his creditor, the dead man reproached him for his deceit and convicted him of lying, saying when and in what place he had repaid him the two hundred gold pieces. The creditor, not knowing what to answer, stood trembling and silent as a mute. The man who had come back to life demanded his note from the creditor. Having received it, he tore it up as he sat on the bier. Then, looking at the hierarch, he said to him:

"You have done well, righteous one, in waking me to expose this sinner; now command me to sleep again."

St. Donatus said to him:

"Go in peace to rest, child, for you shall have your note returned to you."

And at once that man fell asleep again in the sleep of death. All who saw this wondrous miracle, and who heard of it from others, glorified God with great joy, marveling at the power of the virtue of the servant of God.

During St. Donatus's stay at Constantinople there was a lack of rain, and as a result a great drought. At the request of the emperor, the saint went out of the city and performed a litia,[10] beseeching God to send the rain needed for the parched earth. At once after Donatus's prayer there fell so great a rain that all the people said:

"This is a second flood."

The Emperor Theodosius feared for the holy bishop Donatus, lest he be soaked through standing under such a great rain, for he was in a single vestment only. But when St. Donatus returned to the imperial palace after performing the litia, everyone saw that his garments were

10. Litia—a public supplication, usually performed either in the narthex of a church or outside it (in squares, in fields).

perfectly dry and bore not the slightest trace of moisture, for not a single drop of rain had touched them.

All greatly marveled at this miracle. The Emperor, too, rejoiced greatly, seeing the glorious deeds of the servant of God, and gave thanks to God that in his reign He had sent to the world such a lamp, this marvelous wonderworker.

After many conversations with the servant of God, and having received his blessing, the emperor dismissed him to his flock. At this, Theodosius gave St. Donatus much money for the building and adornment of a new church, which the saint wished to build on the aforementioned place obtained from the emperor.

Returning to his episcopate, the blessed Donatus, with the emperor's gift, built a beautiful church, where he prepared a place for his burial. Having attained deep old age, he departed to the Lord,[11] that he might stand before Him in the assembly of the holy hierarchs and forever glorify the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the One God, glorified in the Trinity by all the saints forever. Amen.

* * *

11. The repose of St. Donatus took place about 387 A.D.

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