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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DECEMBER

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THE FIRST DAY OF DECEMBER

December 1

1 декабря

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

Memory of the Holy Prophet Nahum

Память святого пророка Наума

The Holy Prophet Nahum, one of the twelve so-called Minor Prophets, was a native of Galilee, from the village of Elkosh[1].

The principal content of the Book of Nahum is a prophecy of the fall and destruction of Nineveh[2], a foretelling of the calamities which the righteous Lord would bring upon that city, and a most vivid portrayal of the final and complete ruin of that great and strongly fortified city. The Prophet Nahum foretells the destruction of Nineveh as a punishment for its iniquities, and especially for the ruin of the Kingdom of Israel and for the blasphemy of Sennacherib[3] against Jehovah[4]. Thus Nahum repeats the terrible prophecy that had been pronounced against Nineveh by the Prophet Jonah; Jonah's prophecy of Nineveh's destruction (Jon. 2:2) was not revoked but only postponed. The Ninevites, having repented for a short time after the preaching of the Prophet Jonah, and seeing that his prophecy had not been fulfilled

1. Therefore the prophet also calls himself the Elkoshite, or Elkeseian (Nah. 1:1). In the Slavonic and other translations the prophet Nahum is listed as the son of Elkesi; but most commentators (for example, the blessed Jerome, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Epiphanius, and others) take the Hebrew word Elkoshi (rendered in Slavonic as "son of Elkesi") as the name of Nahum's birthplace. According to tradition recorded by the blessed Jerome, the village of Elkosh was situated in the north of Galilee, in the kingdom of Israel.

2. Nineveh was the chief city of the Assyrians, with whom the Jews were then in hostile relations. Nineveh lay on the eastern bank of the river Tigris in Mesopotamia. It was the most populous and wealthiest city of the ancient world; it had a circuit of about 84 versts.

3. *Sennacherib* was the king of Assyria, son and successor of Shalmaneser, who destroyed the kingdom of Israel.

4. Jehovah (in Slavonic, "the Existing One") is one of the names of God. It signifies the self-existence, eternity, and immutability of the Being of God, and is constantly used in Holy Scripture of the one True God.

against them, again turned to their former evil deeds; by this they once more provoked God and offended His long-suffering.

The occasion for the prophecy was the following: when the army of Sennacherib had been wondrously destroyed beneath the walls of Jerusalem, and Sennacherib had withdrawn with threats, the Jews, although they rejoiced at this deliverance, feared that Sennacherib, enraged at his failure, would again gather an army, even greater than before, and again appear, as he had threatened, beneath the walls of Jerusalem. To calm and encourage the Jewish people, the Prophet Nahum came forward with his discourse, in which he foretold the final destruction of Nineveh, which would be ruined by a mighty inundation of waters, while the treasures of the city would be plundered and consumed by fire[5].

The whole Book of the Prophet Nahum presents one continuous exposition of the terrible decree of God concerning the destruction of Nineveh, because from it had come forth one who devised evil against Jehovah (that is, Sennacherib), while deliverance from the yoke of Assyria is foretold for the Kingdom of Judah. There follows a description of the siege and of the very ruin of Nineveh, and finally it is made clear that Nineveh had fully deserved such a fate by its idolatry, and especially by its debauchery and sorcery, through which it enslaved the nations. Therefore no means of defense will save it, and all the peoples will rejoice that they have been freed from so cruel an oppressor[7932].

The time of the Prophet Nahum's ministry belongs to the second half of the reign of the Judean King Hezekiah, that is, to the years 745–714 B.C. (after the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel).

5. This prophecy of the destruction of Nineveh *by water* and fire was fulfilled literally. Nineveh, besieged by enemies (Cyaxares, king of the Medes, and Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, about 600 B.C.), for three years stubbornly withstood the siege, and only the flooding of the river Tigris, which undermined the city walls, gave the enemies the opportunity, before the Ninevites could raise a new wall, to enter the city and destroy it to its foundations (Nah. 3:14). The king of Nineveh, Sardanapalus, despairing of his own safety and fearing captivity, ordered a great pyre built in the palace itself, gathered all his treasures there, and burned himself together with all his concubines. Thus were fulfilled the dread words of Nahum and of another great prophet, Isaiah (Is. 30:33).

Nothing is known of other circumstances of the Prophet's life. According to tradition, he died in the forty-fifth year of his life and was buried in his native land.

Kontakion, Tone 4:

Thy pure heart, illumined in spirit, became the most radiant dwelling-place of prophecy, for thou beholdest distant things as present. Wherefore we honor thee, Blessed Prophet Nahum, the glorious.

* * *

Life of Righteous St. Philaret the Merciful

Житие святого праведного Филарета Милостивого

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt. 5:7), said the Lord. This was fulfilled in the blessed Philaret the Merciful, who, for his great mercy toward the poor, received from God a rich reward both in the present life and in the life to come, as his blessed life bears witness.

The blessed Philaret lived in Paphlagonia[6], in a village called Amnia[7]. His noble parents, George and Anna, raised him from childhood in piety and the fear of God, and his life was adorned with chastity and all the other virtues. Having reached maturity, Philaret entered into marriage with a noble and wealthy maiden named Theosebia, by whom he had three children: a son, John, and two daughters, Hypatia and Euanthia. God blessed the blessed Philaret, as in former times the righteous Job, with an increase of his possessions and abundant riches. He had numerous herds and villages, fruitful fields, and abundance in everything; his treasuries were full of every earthly good, and a great multitude of male and female slaves served in his house. Philaret was known as one of the famous magnates of that land. Possessing such great wealth, and seeing at the same time how many suffered from

6. *Paphlagonia* – a region in the north of Asia Minor, east of Bithynia.
7. *Amnia* – a village situated on the picturesque banks of the river of the same name.

poverty and extreme destitution, he felt compassion for them, and in the tenderness of his soul he said to himself:

"Have I really received so many blessings from the hand of the Lord only so that I might feed on them alone and live in luxury, indulging my belly? Ought I not to share the great wealth God has given me with the poor, widows, orphans, strangers and the needy, whom the Lord, at the Last Judgment, before Angels and men, will not be ashamed to call His brethren, since He says: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me' (Mt. 25:40)[8]? And what benefit will my possessions bring me on the day of the Last Judgment, if in my avarice I keep them for myself alone, for at that Judgment those who have shown no mercy will not receive mercy (Jas. 2:13). Will my possessions be for me in the life to come an immortal food and drink? Will my soft garments serve me there as incorruptible raiment? No, this will not be! For thus says the Apostle: 'We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out' (1 Tim. 6:7). Therefore, if we cannot take anything of our earthly possessions with us from here, it is far better to give it to God, as it were on loan, by the hands of the poor; God will never forsake me, nor my wife, nor my children. Of this the Prophet David assures me, saying: 'I have been young and now am old, and I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread' (Ps. 36:25)."

Reflecting thus in his soul, the blessed Philaret became merciful to the poor as a father to his children: he fed the hungry, clothed the naked, received strangers into his house and provided them with every comfort with love. This righteous man was like the ancient hospitable Abraham[9] and the almsgiving Job. Therefore such a lamp, adorned with works of mercy, could not remain hidden under a bushel, and he became famous throughout the whole land, like a city set on a hill (Mt.

8. Mt. 25:10. – The Lord counts to Himself everything done by a person during earthly life for the neighbors or followers of Christ, and rewards it as if it had been done to Himself.

9. That is, the Old Testament Patriarch Abraham. In his life Abraham presents us with a model of very many of the most instructive virtues, such as: love of mankind, meekness, righteousness, patience, peaceableness, magnanimity, disinterestedness, hospitality, and especially piety, firm and unshaken faith and hope in God, deepest humility and reverence before Him, perfect obedience to Him and complete devotion to His will. – See (Gen. 11:1–32) and following.

5:14). All the poor and needy hastened to find refuge in his house as in a secure haven. And whatever anyone asked of him, whether food, clothing, a horse, an ox, a donkey, or anything else, Philaret supplied it with kindly generosity.

But the time came when the Lover of mankind, the Lord, who orders all things for the benefit of man, permitted the righteous Philaret, like His ancient servant Job, to be subjected to temptation, so that the patience of the saint might be manifested like the patience of Job, and that he, purified by temptation as gold in the furnace, might appear a worthy servant of God. It began with the blessed Philaret falling into poverty; yet this in no way altered his compassion and mercy toward the poor, and he continued to distribute to those in need from what remained to him.

At that time, by God's permission, the Ishmaelites[10] fell upon the land in which Philaret lived; like a destroying whirlwind and a consuming flame, they laid waste the whole country and carried away a multitude of its inhabitants into captivity. Philaret's flocks of sheep and oxen, horses and donkeys were also taken away, and many of his slaves were taken captive. Then this merciful man was brought to such ruin that at last there remained to him only two slaves, a pair of oxen, a horse and a cow. As for the rest of his possessions, either they had been distributed to the poor by his generous hand, or they had been plundered by the Ishmaelites; his villages, gardens and fields were seized by the farmers living round about, some by requests, others by force. And there remained to Philaret only the house in which he lived, and one field. Enduring such poverty, deprivation and misfortune, this good man never grieved or murmured, and, like a second righteous Job, he sinned before God in nothing, not even in word: "he did not sin with

10. By the *Ishmaelites* (that is, the descendants of Ishmael) are meant here the Arabs, the Muslims, whose power was in full flower in the eighth century A.D. The swift and extraordinary growth of Muslim power was a misfortune for Byzantium. The Muslims waged continual and devastating wars with the Greeks. The famous Arab caliph Harun al-Rashid undertook eight devastating campaigns against Byzantium; the regions of Asia Minor, where the righteous Philaret lived, always suffered first from these raids. At the approach of the fierce enemies, the inhabitants hastened to take refuge in mountain gorges and in forests, leaving their homes and property to the mercy of fate. Often, after the enemies had withdrawn, flourishing regions were turned into deserts. This was just what happened in the time of the righteous Philaret.

his lips"[11]. But just as one rejoices in the abundance of his wealth, so he rejoiced in his poverty, which he counted a great treasure, understanding that poverty is a surer path to salvation than riches, as the Lord said that "it is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mt. 19:23)[12].

Once, taking his two oxen, Philaret went out to till the field that remained to him. While working, he glorified and joyfully thanked God that he was beginning, according to His holy commandment, to eat his bread in the sweat of his face (Gen. 3:19), and that labor saved him from sloth and idleness, those teachers of every evil.

He also recalled the words of the Apostle, who forbids the lazy and idle man to eat: "If any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10). And the blessed Philaret tilled his land, so as not to be unworthy to eat his bread.

On that same day a peasant was also plowing his field. And suddenly one of his oxen fell ill and died. The farmer wept bitterly and grieved inconsolably, the more so since the oxen were not his own; he had barely begged them from his neighbor for the working of his field. Then he remembered the blessed Philaret and said:

Ah, if only this merciful lover of the poor had not himself become destitute! Now I would go to him and surely receive from him not just one but even two oxen. But he too is now in great need, and he has nothing with which to help another, however much his heart might desire it. Nevertheless I will go to him all the same; at least he will pity me, and with a word he will console me and ease my heavy grief and sorrow.

Taking his staff, the peasant set out for the Blessed Philaret. Finding him at work in the field, he bowed to him and, with tears, told him of his misfortune: the unexpected death of his ox. Seeing how grieved the man was, the Blessed Philaret at once unyoked one of his own oxen, gave it to the peasant, and said:

11. "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this Job did not sin with his lips" (Job 2:10) – that is, he uttered no blasphemy against God.
12. Concerning these words of the Savior, St. John Chrysostom says: "Christ by these words does not censure wealth, but those who have become attached to it."

"Take this ox of mine, brother, and go and till your land, giving thanks to the Lord."

With gratitude the peasant bowed to the Blessed Philaret, accepting his generous gift, and said:

"My lord! Great and worthy of wonder is your resolve, and your mercy is pleasing to God, but it is not good to separate two oxen that have labored together, and it will be hard for you to manage with only one."

"Take the ox that I give you, brother," the righteous man replied, "and go in peace; I have another ox at home."

The husbandman bowed to the Blessed one down to the ground and, taking the ox, went away, glorifying God and thanking the merciful benefactor.

Philaret, taking the remaining ox and laying the yoke upon his shoulders, went home. As he approached the gate of his house, his wife saw the ox walking ahead while her husband followed behind it with the yoke on his shoulders, and said to him:

"My lord! Where is your other ox?"

Philaret answered her:

"While I was resting after my work and the oxen were grazing at liberty, one of them wandered off and got lost, or perhaps someone took it and led it away to his own place."

Hearing this, Philaret's wife was greatly distressed and hastened to send her son to search for the missing ox. Having gone through many fields, the youth at last found his ox in the yoke with that peasant. Recognizing the ox, he said angrily to the husbandman:

"Wicked, dishonest man! How dared you harness another man's ox and work it? Where and how did you get this ox and yoke it to your own? Is this not the very ox that was lost from my father? You found it and stole it like a wolf and made it your own. Give me back the ox, and if you do not, you will answer for it in court as a thief!"

The husbandman answered him meekly:

"Do not be angry with me, youth, son of a holy man, and do not wrong me without any fault on my part. For your father, having taken pity on my misfortune and poverty, freely gave me this ox of his, since

my own ox, working under the yoke, suddenly and unexpectedly fell dead."

Hearing this, the youth was ashamed of his groundless anger. He hurried home and told his mother all about it. She, listening to him, cried out with tears:

"Woe is me, a poor wife of a merciless husband!"

And she tore her hair, and running with cries and lamentations to her husband, she reproached him:

"Inhuman you are, a man with a heart of stone! Why have you decided to starve us to death before our time? Here, for our sins, we have already lost all our property; but the Lord, who is merciful even to sinners, left us two oxen, so that with their help we might feed our children. You, who once lived in great wealth and never worked with your own hands, now in poverty have grown lazy and do not want to labor and till the land, but wish to sleep sweetly in your room. And therefore you gave your ox to the peasant not for God's sake but for your own, so that you would not have to trouble yourself to yoke it, and could live in idleness and ease. Yet what answer will you give to the Lord if, because of your laziness, I and your children perish from hunger?"

Looking at his wife, the Blessed Philaret answered her with meekness:

"Listen to what God Himself, rich in mercy, says: 'Behold the birds of the air: they neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they?' (Mt. 6:26). Will He not then provide for us, who are far more precious to Him than birds? He promises to repay a hundredfold those who for His sake and for the Gospel give away their property to the poor. Therefore consider: if for one ox we gain a hundred, why should we grieve over that ox which I gave in the name of the Lord to one in need?"

The merciful man said this not because he comforted himself with the hope of a hundredfold reward in this earthly life, but in order to calm his fainthearted wife. And she fell silent, finding no answer to the prudent words of her husband.

Not even five days had passed when that very ox which the Blessed Philaret had given to the peasant ate a poisonous plant and died. This

perplexed the peasant, and returning once more to Philaret, he said to him:

"My lord! I have sinned before you and before your children, in that I separated your pair of oxen; surely it is for this reason that the righteous God did not allow me to profit from your ox, for it ate some poisonous herb and perished."

Without saying a single word, the Blessed Philaret quickly brought his last ox and, giving it to the peasant, said:

"Take this ox, brother, and lead it away; I must go to a distant country, and I do not want a working ox to remain idle in my house without me."

He said this so that the man would not refuse to accept another ox from him. The peasant, taking the ox, returned to his house, marveling at the great mercy of the blessed man. Meanwhile, in Philaret's house everyone soon learned of his deed. The children began to weep together with their mother and said:

"Truly our father is merciless and does not love his children, for he squanders our last property; all that was left to us were two oxen, so that we would not die of hunger, and these too he has given to a stranger."

Seeing the grief and tears of his children, the Blessed Philaret addressed them with these words:

"Children! Why do you give yourselves over to sorrow? Why do you torment yourselves and me? Do you think me hard-hearted? Did I truly intend to ruin you? Be at peace: in a place unknown to you I have stored up so much wealth and so many treasures that they will suffice for you for a hundred years, even if you did nothing and took no thought for anything. I myself cannot even count all those treasures prepared for you."

In saying this, the righteous Philaret did not deceive his children, but truly saw with his spiritual eyes that which was destined to come to pass afterward.

Soon after this, an imperial command came to that country, that all the soldiers should assemble in their regiments and march out against the impious barbarians who had risen against the Greek Empire; each

soldier was required to appear fully armed and with two horses. One poor soldier named Musilius was also enrolled in one of those regiments; he had only one horse, and that very horse, at this very time, suddenly fell ill and died. Having no means to buy a horse, the poor soldier went to the Blessed Philaret and said to him:

"My lord! Have pity on me and help me. I know that you yourself have become destitute in the extreme, and that you have only one horse. But for the sake of the merciful Lord, I beg you: give me your horse, so that I do not fall into the hands of the chiliarch, and so that he does not beat me cruelly."

The Blessed Philaret said to him in reply:

"Take my horse, brother, and go in peace; but know that I give it to you not from fear of punishment from the chiliarch, but for the sake of the mercy of God."

The soldier, taking the horse from the saint, went away from him glorifying God. And there remained then to the holy Philaret, out of all his property, only a cow with its calf, one donkey, and several beehives. Meanwhile one poor man from a distant land, hearing of Philaret the Merciful, came to him and began to ask him, saying:

"My lord! Give me one calf from your herd, so that your gift may also serve me as a blessing from you, for I know that your giving brings a blessing into a house and enriches it in every way."

Then the Blessed Philaret, gladly, brought out his only calf and gave it to the one who asked, saying:

"May the Lord send you His blessing, brother, and give you abundance in all that you need."

That man bowed to Philaret and went away from him, leading the calf with him. Meanwhile the cow, not seeing her calf, began to search for it and, finding it nowhere, raised a mournful lowing throughout the yard. All of Philaret's household grieved greatly for the cow, and his wife in particular was deeply distressed. With tears she began to reproach her husband, saying:

"How long must we endure all this from you? Who would not laugh at your folly? I now see clearly that you care nothing for me, your wife, and you have ruined your children; and now you have not even spared a

dumb beast, which feeds its calf, and you have cruelly taken it from its mother. Whom have you benefited by this? You have deprived and grieved your own house, and you have not enriched the one who begged the calf from you, for his calf too will perish without its mother, and our cow without her calf will grieve and low; so what profit is there either for us or for that man?"

Hearing such words from his wife, the righteous Philaret answered her with meekness:

"Now you have spoken the true word, my wife! Indeed I have not been kind or merciful, since I parted the little calf from its mother; but now I will act better."

And, hastening after the man who had led away the calf, Philaret began to call out to him:

"Brother, return, return with the calf; the cow without her calf gives us no peace, lowing and bellowing at the gate of the house."

The poor man, hearing this from Philaret, thought that he wished to take back the calf he had given him, and said to himself: "Evidently I am not worthy to receive from this righteous man even this one small beast; doubtless he has regretted it and is calling me back in order to take it away from me." When the man returned to Philaret, the calf, seeing its mother, ran to her, and the mother too rushed to it with joyful lowing. The calf, pressing to her teats, did not leave its mother for a long time; and Theosebia, the wife of Philaret, seeing this, rejoiced that the calf had been returned to the house. The Blessed Philaret, seeing the poor man standing sorrowfully and not daring even to utter a word, said to him:

"Brother, my wife says that I sinned by separating the calf from its mother, and she has spoken the truth. Therefore take the cow together with the calf and go in peace; may the Lord bless you and multiply your herd, as once He did mine!"

And the man took the cow with the calf and went home with joy. And God blessed his house for the sake of His servant Philaret; from the cow and calf that had been given to him, within a few years he already had more than two herds of oxen and cows.

Soon after this a famine came upon that country, and the righteous Philaret was reduced to the last extremity of poverty; having nothing with which to feed his wife and children, Philaret took the donkey, which was the only one he had left, and went in another direction to a friend of his; borrowing from him six measures of wheat and loading it upon the donkey, he returned home in joy and fed his wife and children. And when Philaret was resting at home after the journey, a beggar came to him and asked him to give him a sieve of wheat.

"Wife!" said this worthy imitator of Abraham then, addressing her as she was sowing the wheat, "I would like to give this beggar one measure of wheat."

His wife answered him:

"Wait until your children and your wife are fed; first give me one measure, and to your children a measure each, and also to our servant woman; and whatever remains beyond that, give to whomever you wish."

He looked at her and, laughing, said:

"And you will leave nothing for me?"

"Yes, for you are an angel," Theosva replied, "and not a man, and you have no need of food; if you had need of food, you would not be giving away to others the wheat you borrowed."

Philaret, silently pouring out two measures of wheat, gave them to the beggar. Then the wife of Philaret, quite beside herself with grief and vexation, cried out to him:

"Give the beggar a third measure as well, since you have so much wheat."

Philaret measured out yet another measure and sent the poor man away. Theosva, provoked with him, divided the remaining wheat between herself and her children. Meanwhile the borrowed wheat soon ran out, and Theosva with her children had to go hungry again.

Then she went to her neighbors, asked them to lend her half a loaf, cooked it with goosefoot, gave it to the hungry children, and ate with them herself; but they did not even think to call the old man to their table.

Meanwhile one of Philaret's old friends, a wealthy man, heard of Philaret's desperate condition. He sent him four carts loaded with wheat, ten measures each, and wrote with them: "Our beloved brother, man of God! I send you forty measures of wheat for the sustenance of yourself and your household; and when all of it is gone, I will send you as much again. Pray to God for us."

Receiving this gift, Philaret, in a feeling of gratitude for the Lord's mercy, fell to the ground; then, rising and stretching his hands toward heaven, he said:

"I thank Thee, O Lord my God, that Thou hast not forsaken Thy servant who has placed all his hope in Thee."

Seeing such mercy from God, the wife of Philaret was calmed, and said meekly to her husband:

"My lord, set aside for me as much wheat as you think necessary, and for our children as well, and also repay what we borrowed from the neighbors; and take your own share and do with it as you wish."

Philaret did as his wife said and divided the wheat, keeping for himself five measures, which he gave to the poor within two days. This again roused Theosva to indignation, and she would not even eat with him, but dined apart with the children and in secret from him. Once the Blessed Philaret unexpectedly came upon them at dinner and said to them:

"Children! Admit me to your table as well, if not as your father, then as a guest and a stranger."

They laughed and admitted him; while they were eating, his wife said to him:

"My lord! How long will you keep hidden from us that treasure which, as you say, is stored away somewhere? Perhaps you are mocking us and teasing us, as if we were foolish children, with false promises? But if it is true, then show us your treasure; we will take it and buy ourselves food, and we will again dine together, as we did before."

"Wait a little longer," answered the Blessed Philaret, "and soon the great treasure will be shown and given to you."

At last St. Philaret came to such poverty that he had nothing left but a few beehives with honey, on which he himself, his wife and his

children fed. Yet even in such need, when those in want came to him, he shared the honey with them, having no bread to give. His household, seeing that they were thus losing even their last sustenance, went secretly to the bees to strip off all the honey that remained; but they found only one hive, and took from it their whole store. The next morning a beggar came again to Philaret and asked him for alms. Philaret went to the hive, but it was already empty; seeing that he had nothing to give the beggar, the Blessed Philaret took off his outer garment and gave it to him. When he came into the house wearing only his undergarment, his wife said to him:

"Where is your garment? Surely you did not give that away too?"

"I walked about the hives," Philaret answered his wife, "and left it there."

Then his son went to that place and, not finding his father's garment, told his mother. She, ashamed to see her husband in unseemly dress, altered her own garment into a man's garment and put it on Philaret.

In those times the throne of the Greek kingdom was occupied by the Christ-loving Empress Irene with her son Constantine[13]. Since he had already come of age, chosen, trustworthy and prudent men were sent throughout the whole Greek kingdom to seek a beautiful, virtuous and noble maiden who would be worthy to enter into marriage with the young Emperor Constantine. The men sent, desiring to carry out the imperial command more successfully, carefully traversed all the provinces, cities, and even remote hamlets; among other places, they came also to the village of Amnia in Paphlagonia.

As they drew near it, they saw from afar the handsome, tall house of Philaret, surpassing all the others in beauty. Supposing that some

13. The Empress Irene was the wife of the iconoclast Emperor Leo IV the Khazar. For her zealous veneration of icons she suffered persecution from her husband. After his death, Irene ascended the throne together with her young son Constantine (780). In her time the veneration of icons was restored and, at her urging, the Seventh Ecumenical Council was convened, at which the truth of the veneration of icons was proclaimed and iconoclasm condemned. [The Council took place at Nicaea in 787.] Irene's son, and Leo IV's, Constantine reigned under the name of Emperor Constantine VI Porphyrogenitus until the year 797. Irene reigned after her son until the year 802.

noble and wealthy landowner of that district lived there, they sent their servants to it to prepare lodging and a meal for them. But one of the soldiers accompanying the imperial envoys said to them:

"Do not go to that house, my lords, for although it is large and beautiful outside, inside it is empty, so that one cannot find there not only any comforts, but even the bare necessities; an old man lives in it, poorer than whom there is no one in this district."

However, the imperial envoys did not believe the soldier's words, and they ordered their servants to go and carry out what had been entrusted to them.

The Blessed Philaret, as soon as he saw the men approaching his house, took his staff and went out to meet them; bowing to them to the ground, he received them with joy and said:

"Surely the Lord has brought you to me, His servant, my lords; I count it a great honor for myself that I have been found worthy to receive such guests in my humble dwelling."

Then, hastening to his wife, the Blessed one said to her:

"Dear Theosva, prepare a good supper to entertain the honored guests who have come from afar; they have pleased me greatly."

Theosva answered him:

"And of what shall I prepare a good supper? In our whole house there is not a lamb nor even a hen. I can only boil the goosefoot on which we ourselves feed, and that without oil; as for oil and wine, I cannot even remember when they were in our house."

But her husband again said to her:

"Only kindle the fire and prepare the upper chamber, and wash our old ivory dining table; the Lord, who feeds all flesh, will give us food, with which we shall entertain those men."

Theosva set about carrying out her husband's command and wish. Meanwhile the well-to-do inhabitants of that village, learning that the imperial envoys had stopped at Philaret's house, hastened to bring there sheep, rams, hens and pigeons, bread and wine, and in general everything needed for receiving so many guests. Receiving these offerings, Theosva began preparing various dishes from them and arranged a supper in the upper room. Here the imperial envoys gathered to sup,

and they marveled both at the splendor of the room in the house of a completely poor man and at the luxurious ivory dining table, gleaming with gold. Yet what moved them most was the deeply heartfelt hospitality of the host, who in his appearance and manner resembled Abraham the Hospitable himself. While the guests were seated at the table, the son of the Blessed Philaret, John, who resembled his father, entered, and the grandchildren of the Blessed one also came and began zealously serving the guests at table. Watching them, the guests admired their orderly and fitting manner and asked Philaret:

"Tell us, most honorable man, do you have a wife?"

"I do, my lords," Philaret answered them, "and these young men are my sons and grandsons."

And the imperial envoys said to him:

"Let your wife come here and greet us."

Theosva came. Seeing her, a woman still beautiful but already advanced in years, they asked:

"And do you have daughters?"

"My eldest daughter," the blessed Philaret answered them, "has three young daughters."

Then the guests continued:

"Let those maidens come here, that we may see them; for we have the command of our emperors, who sent us, to look over all the young maidens in all the Greek regions and to choose from among them the most beautiful, worthy of an imperial marriage."

But the blessed man said:

"This word does not concern us, our lords and masters, for we are your servants, poor and wretched. Nevertheless, eat and drink now what God has sent, be merry, rest from the journey, and sleep; and tomorrow, may the will of the Lord be done!"

In the morning, when the sun had already risen, the distinguished guests of Philaret awoke and said to him:

"Command, sir, that your granddaughters be brought to us, that we may see them."

"As you command, my lords, so it shall be," the blessed Philaret answered them. "But I ask you at the same time to hear me graciously,

and be pleased to come yourselves into the inner chambers of my house, where you will see our maidens, for they have never yet gone out from our humble dwelling."

The guests at once rose and went after Philaret into his family chambers; there three maidens met them, bowing modestly and respectfully to the guests. When the imperial envoys saw that Philaret's granddaughters were the most beautiful of all the maidens they had seen in all the Greek regions, they could not restrain expressions of rapturous amazement and said:

"We thank the Lord, who has granted us to find what we desired, for one of these maidens will be a worthy bride for our emperor; we shall find none better than them, even if we had to traverse the whole universe."

And, in accordance with the height of the emperor, they chose as bride for him the eldest granddaughter of the blessed Filaret, named Mary, who was taller than her sisters. Pleased with the success of their business, the imperial envoys invited Mary together with her father and mother, her grandfather, and all their close kin, thirty persons in all, and set out with them for the imperial capital, Constantinople. Along with them went ten other maidens chosen in other places, among whom was also the beautiful daughter of a certain distinguished dignitary, Gerontius. During this journey the wise and humble granddaughter of the blessed Filaret addressed her companions, the other maidens, with these words:

"O my sisters, maidens! Since we are all gathered here for one and the same reason, to be presented to the emperor, let us agree among ourselves how to act, when the King of Heaven gives one of us an earthly kingdom by appointing her as the emperor's wife. Since it is impossible for all of us to ascend to this height, but only one of us will be chosen, let her, in her royal majesty, remember us and not withhold her protection from us."

The daughter of the nobleman Gerontius answered Mary:

"Let it be known to all of you that none of you can be chosen as the emperor's wife except me, for I am above all of you in noble birth, in wealth, in beauty, and in wisdom. With your poverty, low birth, and

simplicity, how can you hope to enter the imperial halls, relying only on the beauty of your face?"

Hearing these mad and proud words, Mary fell silent, but she committed herself to the will of God and placed her trust in the prayers of the holy elder, her grandfather.

At last the embassy reached Constantinople, and the maidens were conducted into the imperial palace, where their arrival was at once reported to the emperor's chamberlain and steward of the palace, Stauracius. The daughter of Gerontius was presented to Stauracius first of all. Her pride did not escape the keen eye of the experienced courtier, and he said to her:

"You are fair and beautiful, maiden, but you cannot be a wife to the emperor."

And, having generously rewarded her, he sent her home. Thus were fulfilled the words of Scripture: "Everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted" (Lk. 18:14).

After all of them, the granddaughter of the righteous Filaret, Mary, was presented together with her mother, her grandfather, and all their close kin. Seeing them, the emperor, his mother, and Stavrikios were struck by the goodness of their hearts and their decorum. All were greatly amazed also at the beauty of Mary, on whose face her good qualities were clearly expressed: meekness, humility, and the fear of God. Standing before the emperor with modestly lowered eyes, Mary was flushed with a bright blush spreading over her cheeks. She greatly pleased the emperor, and he betrothed her to himself as his bride. Her second sister was chosen as bride by one of the courtiers close to the emperor, the distinguished patrician[14] Constanticius; and the third sister was given in marriage to the ruler of the Lombards[15], so that through this kinship alliance, the marriage of the emperor with the granddaughter of the blessed Filaret was celebrated with great festivities, in which the imperial nobles, the people, and the whole family of

14. The title of *patrician* originally belonged only to the children of senators, who were called *rangea* in Latin. Later this designation came to be applied to all persons of noble Roman origin. But the Emperor Constantine made the title of patrician a personal dignity, which was bestowed upon the highest officials but did not pass by inheritance.

15. *Lombards* – one of the peoples of the Germanic tribe.

the blessed Filaret took part. The emperor sincerely loved the blessed elder and, embracing him affectionately, kissed his venerable head. Having praised Filaret for his piety and that of his whole family, the emperor surrounded them all with great honors and gave them silver, gold, and precious stones, sumptuous garments, large and beautiful houses, and other property. Having thus honored and kissed the blessed man, the emperor dismissed him with his family to the splendid dwelling bestowed upon them.

Having received such rich gifts, the wife of Philaret, his children, and all his household remembered the words of Philaret, who had many times told them that he kept treasures in a secret place, which God had prepared for them. Falling at the feet of the saint, they said to him:

"Forgive us, our master and lord, for all the foolish sins we have committed against you! Forgive us that we condemned you and reproached you for your generous alms to the poor and wretched. Now we have been convinced that 'Blessed is he who considers the poor [and needy]!' (Ps. 40:2). Truly, whatever a man gives to a brother in need, he gives to God Himself, who repays him a hundredfold in this world and grants him a blessed life in eternity. Surely, for the sake of your alms to the poor, O man of God, the Lord has sent you His rich mercy, and for your sake, to all of us."

The blessed elder raised his hands to heaven and cried out:

"Blessed be God, who was pleased to do this. 'Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and forevermore' (Ps. 112:2)."

Then, turning to his family, Filaret said:

"Listen to my counsel: let us prepare a good meal and beseech the emperor and our lord to come to feast with us, together with all his nobles."

"As you wish," they answered, "so let it be!"

When everything was ready for the feast, the blessed man went out of his house and walked through the city and its environs, seeking out beggars, lepers, blind, lame, old, and infirm people. Gathering up to two hundred of them, he brought them into his house, and, leaving them first before the gates, went alone to his household and said to them:

"My children! The emperor is approaching with his nobles. Is everything ready for the entertainment?"

"Everything is ready, honored father," they answered him.

The blessed man gave a sign with his hand to the beggars, and behold, to the indescribable amazement of the household, a great multitude of beggars and wretched people entered the house; some of them Filaret seated at the table, while for others, for lack of room, it was necessary to sit on the floor, and among the latter the master of the house himself took his place. Seeing this, the household of Filaret understood that, in calling the emperor, he meant Christ Himself, who was now coming to their house in the form of beggars, and that the nobles of the King of Heaven are all this wretched brotherhood, which can do much with God through its prayers. And the household marveled at the great humility of their father, who, having attained such glory and being the grandfather of the empress, had not forgotten his love of almsgiving, and now reclined among the beggars and the poor and served them as a slave. And they said:

"Truly this is a man of God and a true disciple of Christ, who has well learned the commandment of Christ, who said: 'Learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart' (Mt. 11:29)."

The blessed man also commanded his son John, already a spatharios[16], and his grandsons, to be at the dining table and to serve the reclining brotherhood. Then, calling together his whole family, the blessed man said:

"See, my children, you have quite unexpectedly received riches from God, as I promised you, trusting in the mercy of God. This promise has been fulfilled. Tell me, is there still any debt owed by me?"

They, recalling his earlier words, wept and all said with one accord:

"Truly, our lord, you foresee the future as a servant of God; and we were foolish in provoking you, a venerable elder. Therefore we beseech you: do not remember the sins of our ignorance!"

But the blessed man said to them:

"The Lord is merciful and generous, who has repaid us a hundredfold for the little we gave to the poor in His name. If you also wish to

inherit eternal life, let each of you set aside ten gold coins for this wretched brotherhood, and the Lord will accept them from you as the two mites of the widow."

With all their hearts they hastened to fulfill his wish. And the blessed Filaret, having sufficiently feasted the beggars, gave each of them a gold coin and dismissed them.

After some time the blessed Filaret again called his wife and children and said:

– Our Lord said, "Put them to use until I come" (Lk. 19:13). And I desire to follow this divine instruction; I wish to sell a portion of the property bestowed upon me by the emperor. You, then, buy this portion from me and give me gold, for I need it; but if you are unwilling to buy it, I shall give it all away to my brethren—the poor. For me, it is enough to be called the empress's grandfather.

They examined his property, assessed its value, and bought it from him for 60 litras[17] of gold. Having received this gold, the blessed man distributed it to the poor. When the emperor and his nobles learned of this, they were greatly pleased by Philaret's generosity, and from then on they gave the righteous man much gold to distribute among the poor. Once Philaret had three chests made, all exactly alike in size and appearance, and filled one with gold coins, another with silver coins, and the third with copper coins. He entrusted their care to his faithful servant Callistus. Whenever some poor person came to him asking for help, Philaret would tell Callistus to give alms to the petitioner. And when the servant asked from which chest he should help the petitioner, the saint answered him:

– From whichever one God directs you, for God knows the need of each, poor and rich, and nourishes all living things according to His good pleasure (Ps. 144:16).

The righteous man said this to show the difference among the poor who ask for alms. For there are some petitioners who were once rich,

16. *Spatharios* – a squire, the emperor's bodyguard.

17. *Litra* – a pound, a Byzantine measure of weight equal to 72 zolotniks; in silver it was worth up to 42 rubles, and in gold up to 606 rubles. This measure must be distinguished from the litra, a measure of dry and liquid substances.

but through various misfortunes and calamities have been ruined and deprived not only of all their property, but even of their daily bread. Yet, having retained something of their former clothing, they conceal their need beneath it, ashamed of it, and ask for help only because of dire necessity. There are other petitioners who deliberately dress in poor clothing and, concealing their wealth, solicit assistance under the guise of poverty; these may indeed be called extortioners and idolaters. Keeping all this in mind, the merciful Philaret would say:

– God knows the need of each, and He directs the hand of the almsgiver as He pleases.

And this blessed lover of the poor himself, when giving alms, would put his hand into the treasury without looking, and whatever he happened to take from a chest—copper, silver, or gold—he would give to the petitioner. This venerable elder would relate, swearing and calling God to witness, that whenever he saw a person in respectable clothing and put his hand into a chest, intending to take a copper coin, since from the person's clothing he did not consider him poor, his hand would each time unconsciously reach into the chest with silver or gold, which he would then give to that petitioner. At times someone quite different would ask Philaret for help, dressed in rags; he would already be reaching out his hand, wishing to give a more generous alms, but his hand would seem to be held back, and he would take out very little. All this happened not by chance, but was directed by the providence of God, who knows our true needs.

Every four years the blessed Philaret would come to the imperial palace to visit his granddaughter, the empress, but he never wore purple robes with a golden belt there. When he was pressed to dress in such splendid garments, he would say:

– Leave me be. I thank my God and glorify His great and wondrous name, for He has raised me from poverty and obscurity to such a height. Is it not honor enough for me to be called the Empress's grandfather? That alone is entirely sufficient for me.

The blessed man remained so humble that he would not even accept any rank or title, calling himself simply Philaret of Amnia. Thus, spending his whole life in humility and charity, Philaret drew near to

the blessed end of his life. Informed of it by God, the blessed Philaret, while still in good health, secretly took his faithful servant and went with him to one of the monasteries of Constantinople, called "Rodolphia," where maidens in black monastic garb lived a life of ascetic struggle. Having given the abbess a considerable sum of gold for the needs of the monastery, he asked her to procure a new coffin for him and said:

– I wish you to know, but to tell no one, that in a few days I shall leave this earthly life and depart to another world and to another King. And I ask you to lay my body in this new coffin.

He also forbade his servant to speak of this to anyone until he himself should reveal it. Soon afterward, having distributed all his property to the poor and needy, Philaret fell ill in that monastery and took to his bed. On the ninth day he summoned his wife and children and all his family, and spoke to them kindly in a quiet voice:

– Let it be known to you, my children, that the Holy King is calling me to Himself today; and now I leave you and go to Him.

Not understanding these words, but thinking that Philaret spoke of the earthly king, they replied:

– It is impossible for you to go to the king today, since you are lying sick.

But Philaret answered them:

– Behold, those who are to take me and present me before the King are already ready.

Then they understood that Philaret was speaking of his departure to the King of Heaven, and they raised a loud lament, as in ancient times Joseph and his brethren lamented over their father Jacob (Gen. 50:1, 10). But he made a sign with his hand for them to be silent, and began to instruct and comfort them, saying:

– My children, you have known and seen the life I led from my youth, and God also knows that I did not live by the labor of others, but earned my bread by my own labor. As for the wealth God gave me, I was not exalted by it, but, fleeing pride, I loved humility, in obedience to the Apostle, who enjoins: "Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not high-minded" (1 Tim. 6:17)—that is, that they

not think highly of themselves or become exalted. And when I fell into poverty, I did not grieve or blaspheme God, but, like righteous Job, I thanked Him that in His love He had chastened me; and seeing my patient gratitude, He brought me forth from poverty again and raised me to the honorable fellowship and kinship of kings and princes. And when I had been raised to such a height, my heart ever remained in deep humility: "O Lord, my heart was not exalted, nor were mine eyes lifted up; neither did I exercise myself in great matters, nor in things too wonderful for me" (Ps. 130:1)[18]. And the wealth with which the earthly king endowed me I did not use for earthly goods, but sent it to the King of Heaven by the hands of the poor. So I ask you also, my beloved, to follow the example set before you; and if you do even more good, you will be deemed worthy of even greater blessedness. Do not value fleeting riches, but send them where I am now going. Do not leave your possessions here, lest strangers or enemies who hate you make use of them. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers (Heb. 13:2). Defend widows, help orphans, visit the sick and those imprisoned in dungeons. Do not shun fellowship with the Church; do not steal what belongs to another, wrong no one, speak evil of no one, and do not rejoice in the sorrows and misfortunes even of your enemies. Bury the dead and commemorate them in the holy churches; and remember me also, unworthy as I am, in your prayers, until you too pass into the blessed life eternal.

When he had finished his soul-profiting instruction, the blessed Philaret said to his son John:

– Bring your sons to me—my grandsons.

When they came, he told them what would happen to them in their lives. To his eldest grandson he said:

– You will choose a companion from a distant land and live with her piously and prudently.

To his second grandson he said:

18. In this verse of the psalm David testifies before God that he had neither a haughty heart nor proud eyes, but as he was humble in heart, so he showed humility in his eyes. – To walk in great and wondrous things means the same as to boast of great and glorious deeds. The psalmist humbly confesses that he, standing at a high degree of dignity, was established more on humility than on pride; and therefore he exalted himself neither in words nor in deeds above what he was.

– For 24 years, in the monastic rank, you will bear Christ's yoke well, and, having lived in a manner pleasing to God, you will depart to the Lord.

The blessed man also foretold the future to his third grandson. All these predictions of the blessed man were later fulfilled in his descendants. Like the patriarch Jacob in ancient times, this blessed man, like a prophet, foresaw all that was to come and clearly foretold the fate of his grandsons. Two of his granddaughters, maidens, came to Philaret with the others and said to him:

– Bless us too, father!

– And the Lord will bless you, – Philaret said to them. – You will spend your lives in virginity, estranged from this sin-loving world and undefiled by its carnal passions; and after serving the Lord not long, but in a manner pleasing to God, you will be deemed worthy to receive great blessings from Him!

All these final words of the righteous man came to pass; for both these pious maidens entered the convent of the Most Holy Theotokos in Constantinople, and after 12 years of ascetic struggle in virgin purity, fasting, prayerful vigil, and other monastic labors, both reposed peacefully in the Lord at the same time.

Having prayed for his wife, his children, all his relatives, and the whole world, the blessed Philaret's face shone like the sun, and he began joyfully to chant David's psalm: [19] (Ps. 100:1).

When he had finished the psalm, the whole room was filled with a wondrous fragrance, as though sweet perfumes had been poured out. After that psalm, the blessed man began to say the prayer, "Our Father, who art in heaven"; and when he had uttered, "Thy will be done," he raised his hands to heaven, stretched himself out upon his bed, and gave his soul to the Lord. He was then 90 years old. Yet even at such an advanced age, his face had not changed, but shone with indescribable beauty, like a ripe apple.

Hearing of the saint's repose, the emperor hastened to the monastery with the empress and his nobles; they kissed the holy face of Phil-

19. "I will sing to Thee of mercy and judgment, O Lord."

aret and his hands. All wept over his death and gave generous alms to the poor in his memory.[20]

When the coffin of Philaret was borne to the place of burial, there presented itself to the eyes of all a striking and moving spectacle: to his funeral there had gathered from various towns and villages an innumerable multitude of beggars and the destitute, and they, with cries and sobbing, like ants pressed about his coffin, some limping, some crawling, and calling out:

"O Lord God! Why hast Thou deprived us of such a father and provider? Who without him will feed and clothe us, naked and hungry? Who will shelter the wanderers in his house? Who will gather up the dead cast out in the street and commit them to honorable burial? Better that we all had died before him than that we should lose our benefactor!"

Seeing the tears and hearing the lamentations of these poor folk, the emperor and the empress themselves, and their nobles who walked behind the coffin with them, were moved and wept.

While the body of the blessed one was being carried to the prepared tomb, there suddenly appeared in the crowd a poor man named Kavokokos, who had often received alms from St. Philaretos. From his very birth this man had been possessed by an unclean spirit, which many times cast him now into fire, now into water, during his seizures at the new moon. When this poor man heard of the death of Philaretos and that his holy body was already being carried to the place of burial, he at once hastened after his coffin. And when he had run up to the coffin, the evil spirit within him could not bear his zeal for the saint, and began to torment him and stirred him to blaspheme the saint; the sick man barked like a dog and clutched so tightly at the bier on which the body of the departed lay that it was impossible to tear him away from it. When the bier had been brought to the prepared grave, the evil spirit, throwing the sufferer to the ground, went out of him, and he rose up healthy, praising and glorifying God. All the people marveled at this miracle and glorified God, who had bestowed such grace upon His

20. St. Philaret lived four years after the marriage of his granddaughter, which took place in 788 – consequently he reposed in 792.

servant Philaretos. After this his honorable body was laid in the coffin prepared for it in the nunnery, in the very place which he had chosen for himself while still alive.

Thus God blesses the merciful both in the present life (as we have seen from what has just been read) and in the life to come (of which we shall learn from what follows).

One of the close friends of Philaretos, a man wise, pious, and God-fearing, calling God to witness, related the following under oath:

"Once, some time after the death of the blessed Philaretos," he tells, "at night I found myself with terror transported to a place which cannot even be described; there I saw a man, bright of countenance, who showed me a fiery river flowing so noisily and terribly that no one of men could endure the sight of it. On the other side of the river was visible a beautiful paradise, full of ineffable joy and gladness, fragrant with an ineffable aroma; large, beautiful, and fruitful trees swayed there in the gentle wind and made a wondrous rustling. And it is impossible even to tell in words of all the blessings of that paradise, 'which God has prepared for those who love Him' (1 Cor. 2:9).

And there I saw a multitude of people in white garments, rejoicing and partaking of the fruits of those paradise trees. Looking attentively at those people, I saw a man (it was Philaretos, but I did not recognize him), clothed in bright raiment, sitting on a golden throne in the midst of that garden; on one side near him stood newly enlightened children with candles in their hands, on the other side a multitude of beggars and the destitute in white garments, who pressed about him, since each of them wished to draw nearer to him. And there appeared a youth with a bright face but terrible in aspect, holding in his hand a golden staff. Then I, though with fear and trembling, ventured to ask him:

"Lord! Who is he that sits on the most bright throne in the midst of those bright-looking men? Is it not Abraham?"

And the bright youth answered me:

"This is Philaretos of Amnia, who, for his great love of the poor and his almsgiving, and for his honorable and pure life, like Abraham, is established here."

After that, this new Abraham, the holy and righteous Philaretos, looking upon me with his bright gaze, began to call me to himself and said quietly:

"Child, come thou also hither, that thou mayest enjoy the same blessings."

But I answered:

"I cannot reach there, blessed father: this fiery river frightens me and hinders me; the passage through it is narrow, and the bridge is inconvenient for crossing, and many people in it are burned by the fire; I fear lest I too should fall there likewise,—and who will then draw me out from there?"

The saint, however, said:

"Fear not, but cross boldly, since all who are now here came hither by the same way, and there is no other way than this. So thou too, child, cross over to us without any fear, and I will help thee."

And he stretched out his hand to me, calling me. I, feeling courage, began to cross the river safely, and when I drew near to the saint's hand and touched it, that wondrous vision at once vanished; I awoke, and weeping bitterly, said to myself: how shall I cross that terrible river, and how shall I reach the paradise dwelling?"

This account was confirmed under oath by one of the relatives of the blessed Philaretos, so that we may know what mercy they obtain from God who give alms to the poor in His name.

The blessed Theosva, wife of St. Philaretos, after the burial of her husband's honorable body, returned from Constantinople to her native land, the country of Paphlagonia, and there used her wealth, received from the emperor and the empress, for the building and restoration of the churches of God which had been burned by the Persians in former times. She also furnished those churches with sacred vessels and vestments. She further founded there monasteries, hospices, and shelters for the poor and the sick, and then again set out for Constantinople to her granddaughter, Empress Maria. Here, having spent the rest of her life in the service of God, she peacefully fell asleep in the Lord and was buried beside the tomb of her righteous husband.

By their prayers may we too obtain mercy on the day of judgment from our one bountiful and merciful Lord Jesus Christ. To Him, with His Unbegotten Father and the Holy Spirit, belong honor and glory unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Troparion, Tone 4:

Imitating Abraham in faith, and following Job in patience, O Father Philaretos, thou didst distribute the good things of the earth to the needy, and bravely didst endure their loss. Wherefore Christ our God, the Master of the contest, crowned thee with the bright crown; entreat Him that our souls be saved.

Kontakion, Tone 3:

Truly thy purchase is seen to be most advantageous, and it is judged wise by all who think wisely: for thou didst give away the things of earth which are fleeting, and didst seek the things above which are eternal. Wherefore thou hast worthily gained eternal glory, merciful Philaretos.

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NOTES

7932. Apart from the prophecy of the fall of Nineveh, messianic features may also be found in the Book of the Prophet Nahum. "Nahum foretells," says Blessed Theodoret, "the destruction of Nineveh, its army and its city, because although they repented after the preaching of Jonah, they soon forgot it and went out with weapons against Israel. But," he continues, "there is in the book also a prophecy about the Savior of this kind: 'The destroyer has come up against you; keep the fortresses, watch the road, strengthen the loins, gather strength' (Nah. 2:1) (in the Slavonic: 'vzyde vdykhayay v litse tvoye,' 'he who breathes into your face'), for as God breathed the breath of life into Adam, so the Lord Christ, renewing that image, 'breathed' upon the Apostles and said to them: 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (Jn. 20:22). Therefore under the whole shattered kingdom of the Assyrians in the Book of Nahum we understand the power of the devil, vanquished by the Lord Christ, and under the exulting Judah we understand the universe exulting in salvation." – The Book of the Prophet Nahum is not used in the services of the Orthodox Church.

THE SECOND DAY OF DECEMBER

December 2

2 декабря

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

Memory of the Holy Prophet Habakkuk

Память святого пророка Аввакума

The Holy Prophet Habakkuk was the son of Asaphat and descended from the tribe of Simeon, as St. Epiphanius of Cyprus relates of him in his book *On the Lives of the Prophets*. According to the tradition recorded by the holy fathers,[1] Habakkuk's homeland was the small village of Betzochar, otherwise called Viezahir.

The very name Habakkuk,[2] given to him at birth, foretold that he would become an ascetic strong in spirit. Having come to perfect age, he zealously came forward, for the glory of the name of God, to denounce the lawlessness of his people. Burning in spirit for the Lord, he himself observed the commandments of God strictly and stood firmly on the path of virtue, and he was counted worthy by the Lord of the gift of prophecy.

Habakkuk prophesied and lived after the reign of the pious Judean king Hezekiah, when the throne was occupied by impious kings: Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, and then Amon, son of Manasseh.[3] According to the testimony of Holy Scripture (2 Chron. 33:9; 4 Kgdms. 21:2–10), among the Judean people under Manasseh there were constant quarrels and wickedness: the strong oppressed the weak, and there was

1. The Blessed Epiphanius of Cyprus and St. Isidore of Seville.
2. Habakkuk: in Hebrew it means properly "one who embraces, grapples," and then "a strong wrestler, an ascetic."
3. The beginning of Habakkuk's prophetic activity should be placed in the years of the reign of Manasseh, when that impious king, taken captive by Esarhaddon, humbled himself and repented in captivity. The prophecies of Habakkuk belong to the period from 660 B.C. and span the years of the reign of Amon's successor, the pious King Josiah, down to 611 B.C.

nowhere to seek a just judgment. King Manasseh himself was the first persecutor of the innocent: he shed a very great deal of innocent blood, so that he filled Jerusalem with it from end to end (4 Kgdms. 21:16). According to tradition, among the innocent who suffered at this time was also the holy prophet Isaiah, just as many other denouncers of the unrighteousness and impiety of the king and the people suffered.

Afterwards King Manasseh, punished by God and taken captive by the Assyrians, repented and turned to the True God. But the evil he had sown had already put down deep roots among the Hebrew people; and Manasseh was succeeded by his impious son Amon, who, like his father, was given over to crude idolatry.

The Prophet Habakkuk deeply grieved over the corruption of his contemporaries. Finding no righteousness anywhere, he poured out his sorrow, crying out to the Lord:

"How long, O Lord, shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear me? shall I cry out unto Thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save? Why dost Thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievousness? spoiling and violence are before me; and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth" (Hab. 1:2–4).

Thus the prophet cried out to the Lord, seeing the iniquities of men and expecting a righteous judgment from God Himself. In answer, the Lord made known to His chosen one that punishment for the universal impiety was soon to come. By the command of God, the Prophet Habakkuk foretold to the Hebrews an event so terrible that in his time it was even hard to believe: namely, the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem itself, and the Babylonian captivity.[4]

The prophet clearly indicated that the Lord had chosen the Chaldeans[5] as the instruments of this punishment, a fierce and unbridled people who swiftly traverse the expanses of the earth in order to seize the settlements of others.

In trembling expectation of the dread invasion, the Prophet Habakkuk wondered: would the righteous Lord really allow the proud

and impious Chaldeans completely to destroy His chosen people? In the hope that this chastisement would be temporary, he awaited a new revelation from the Lord, and in his prayerful waiting he was like a watchman who gazes sharply into the distance from a city tower[6] in order to announce the approach of the enemy. He ardently besought the Lord to save the Hebrew people from Babylonian slavery, as once He had saved them from Egyptian slavery, and he waited for the Lord to speak to him.

Then the Lord revealed to His prophet that all the salvation of the chosen people amid these calamities lay in faith, and that the proud and unbridled Chaldeans themselves would have to undergo the same fate that they had prepared for the vanquished peoples (Hab. 2:4). After that, in order not to plunge his compatriots into despair over the trial God had prepared for them, the Prophet Habakkuk uttered a parable on the ruin of the Chaldeans, proclaiming a fivefold woe upon the oppressors (Hab. 2:9–19). In this parable he showed all the nothingness of the idols and the might of the Chaldeans before the majesty of the True God, who advances for the salvation of His people. The prophet, in illumination from on high, foretold that God would come for the salvation of His people from the mountain overshadowed by thickets (Paran), for the salvation of His Anointed, and that a time would come when the

5. Chaldeans: in Hebrew *hasidim*; they descended from Hesed, son of Nahor, brother of Abraham (Gen. 22:22). Belonging to a Semitic root, the Chaldeans originally lived in the northern mountainous country of Mesopotamia, nearer to Armenia, south of Lake Van. From this ancient region the Chaldeans spread along the course of the Euphrates, southward and eastward through all Mesopotamia and Babylonia, and soon became the dominant people. During the dominion of the Assyrians they made many conquests together with them, and after Babylonia separated from Assyria, under Nabopolassar and especially under Nebuchadnezzar, they conquered many peoples and kingdoms. Everywhere in their conquests the Chaldeans were distinguished by extreme cruelty and warlike spirit.

4. Book of the Prophet Habakkuk (Hab. 1:6–12). The same punishment, for the impiety of the people in the reign of Manasseh and his son, is spoken of in 4 Kgdms. 21:12–14.

6. (Hab. 2:1). The manner of speech is taken from the custom of setting up watch-towers on mountains and high places, so that sentinels could in good time learn of danger to settlements, and announce the approach of an enemy, or victory and defeat. The holy prophets were sentinels, set by God as it were on a certain height to observe and proclaim His will. At this *Divine* watch the holy Prophet Habakkuk, detached from all earthly things, kept vigil in spirit and fervently prayed to God for the revelation of His will concerning His people. Being in such a state, he reverently waited for the ray of God's light to penetrate his mind, illumine the eyes of his soul, and for what the Lord would speak to him.

whole earth would be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters fill the sea (Hab. 3:13).[7954]

When Nebuchadnezzar drew near to Jerusalem, then, according to the testimony of tradition, the Prophet Habakkuk withdrew from the city. Knowing that the calamity was already inevitable and that resistance to so mighty a conqueror would be useless, the prophet sorrowfully left his fatherland so as not to see its ruin and to escape the cruelty of the victor. By the direction of God, Habakkuk settled in the land of Arabia, in the city of Ostrakine,[7] and lived here as a voluntary exile until the enemies had departed from his fatherland.

After the Chaldeans withdrew, he returned to his land, lamented its calamity, and together with the survivors of the people took up farming. In prayer to God for his people he awaited the return of those taken captive from Babylon.

Once, during the harvest, the prophet cooked a pottage and, taking bread, went into the field to bring this meal to the reapers. But on the way the Angel of the Lord appeared to him and said:

"Take this meal to Babylon, to Daniel, into the lions' den."

At that time, indeed, the Prophet Daniel, who lived at the court of the Babylonian king, had been cast into the lions' den out of the hatred of the impious Babylonians.

But Habakkuk, not knowing the city of Babylon, answered the Angel:

"Lord! I have never seen Babylon, and I do not know the lions' den."

Then the Angel of the Lord, by the power of his spirit, caught up Habakkuk and, lifting him by the hair, carried him to Babylon and set him directly above the pit into which Daniel had been cast.

And Habakkuk cried out:

"Daniel! Daniel! Take the meal which God has sent thee."

And Daniel gave thanks to God and said:

"Thou hast remembered me, O God, and hast not forsaken those who love Thee."

7. Ostrakine: a city on the border of Arabia, Palestine and Egypt.

Daniel rose and partook of the food. And the Angel of the Lord instantly set Habakkuk back in his former place.

After the miraculous visit to Daniel, the Prophet Habakkuk returned to his reapers at the time of their meal, and he told no one of what had happened. He perceived that the Judean people would be returned by the Lord from Babylon to Jerusalem, just as his own miraculous transport to Babylon and return from there had come to pass. But this trial of God's people lasted 70 years, and Habakkuk did not live to see the return of the Hebrews from captivity; he died in old age and was buried with honor on his own field.[8]

Kontakion, Tone 8:

Thou who didst proclaim from the south to the whole world the coming of God from the Virgin, O God-speaking Habakkuk, and by standing on the divine watch didst hear from the radiant Angel the Resurrection of Christ, and didst announce it to the world: wherefore we joyfully cry out to thee: Rejoice, bright glory of the prophets!

* * *

Passion of the Holy Martyr Miropia

Страдание святой мученицы Миропии

The Holy Virgin Miropia was from the city of Ephesus.[9] Her parents were Christians. When her father was no longer living, she received holy baptism. Raised by her mother in the fear of God, she was diligent in coming to the tomb of the Holy Martyr Hermione, one of the daughters of the Holy Apostle Philip. She would take the healing myrrh which flowed from the relics of St. Hermione and, giving it to the sick, she healed them.

8. The death of the prophet Habakkuk followed approximately 600 years before Christ. According to the account of the church historian of the 4th century, Eusebius of Caesarea, the tomb of the prophet Habakkuk was pointed out in Keilah, or in Kila, in the tribe of Judah. According to the testimony of the church historian of the 5th century, Sozomen, the relics of this holy prophet, by Divine revelation, were discovered together with the relics of the holy prophet Micah in the reign of Theodosius II the Younger (408–450). The bodies of both prophets were indicated by a Divine dream to Zebennus, who at that time was bishop of the church of Eleutheropolis.

At that time Decius reigned.[10] When he raised a persecution against the Christians, Miropia's mother moved with her to the island of Chios,[11] where she had an ancestral estate. Here she dwelt with her daughter, shut up in her house and praying to God. Once the Prince Numerian arrived on this island. By his command, the blessed Isidore, a wondrous and devout man, by rank a soldier, was seized for confessing the Christian faith. Since he did not wish to renounce Christ and rejected the worship of idols, the prince, subjecting him to various torments, condemned him to death by the sword. Then his body was thrown into a ravine to be devoured by beasts and birds, and at some distance a guard was posted so that the Christians would not steal the body of the martyr. Filled with divine zeal, the Holy Virgin Miropia came with her servants by night, secretly took the body of the martyr, and, having performed the funeral prayers with honor, buried it in a place specially prepared.

Learning that the body of Isidore had been stolen, the prince placed the guards in chains and commanded that they be led about the island and tortured, declaring that if they did not find the stolen body by the appointed time, their heads would be cut off.

The Holy Miropia, seeing the suffering of the guards who were bound and being dragged about, and hearing that they faced execution, was moved in her soul and thought:

"If these guards suffer torments and are put to death because of me, who secretly carried off the body, then woe will be mine at the Judgment of God, and my soul, guilty of the murder of those men, will be in torment."

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9. Ephesus: the principal city of the Asian province of Asia Minor; situated on the river Cayster, not far from the Aegean Sea, on the western shore of Asia Minor. Ephesus was famous as a commercial center. Here also was the famous pagan temple of Artemis or Diana. Christianity penetrated here already in the times of the Apostles: first the disciples of John the Baptist taught here, then the Apostle Paul preached the Gospel and afterwards wrote his epistle to the inhabitants of this city; then the holy Evangelist John the Theologian also preached and lived there. Therefore the Church of Ephesus, according to the words of St. Irenaeus, was a true witness of the Apostolic tradition. At present, on the site of ancient Ephesus there is a poor Turkish village, Ayasoluk.

10. Decius: a Roman emperor who reigned 249–251.

11. Chios: an island in the Aegean Sea (Archipelago), opposite the city of Smyrna.

And, unexpectedly for everyone, she cried out to the soldiers:

"Friends! I took the body of the man you had killed while you were asleep."

Hearing this, the soldiers at once seized her and brought her before the Prince Numerian, saying:

"Master, here is the one who stole the corpse."

The prince asked the saint:

"Is it true what they say about you?"

"It is true," answered the saint.

"How did you dare, accursed woman, to do this?" cried the prince.

Miropia answered:

"I dared, because I despise and spit upon your wickedness and godlessness."

At these words the proud prince fell into a great rage and immediately ordered her to be beaten mercilessly with rods. They beat her for a long time; then, seizing her by the hair, they dragged her over the whole island and tortured every part of her body. At last, barely alive, she was cast into prison. At midnight, while the saint was praying, light shone throughout the prison, and before her appeared a host of Angels, in whose midst stood St. Isidore, and they all sang the thrice-holy hymn. Looking upon the martyr, Isidore said:

“Peace to thee, Miropia. Thy prayers have reached God, and behold, thou shalt be with us and receive the crown prepared for thee.”

As St. Isidore spoke these words, the holy Martyr Miropia joyfully gave up her spirit to God [12]. And the prison was filled with an ineffable fragrance, at which the guards were seized with fear and amazement. One of them, who had seen and heard all this clearly, hastened to a priest and told him everything in detail; he received holy Baptism and later was himself deemed worthy of the martyr’s crown. The Christians took the body of St. Miropia and buried it with honor, glorifying God.

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12. The death of St. Miropia followed about 251, under the emperor Decius.

Life of our Venerable Father Athanasius of the Kiev Caves

Житие преподобного Афанасия Печерского

"I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he die, yet shall he live" (Jn. 11:25). The Savior fulfilled this word, spoken of Lazarus who had been dead four days, in our Venerable Father Athanasius, the recluse of the Kiev Caves, desiring that we too might fulfill the word of the rich man concerning poor Lazarus: "if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent" (Lk. 16:30).

This Venerable Athanasius was a monk in the holy Monastery of the Caves, leading a holy and God-pleasing life. After a long illness, he died. The brethren washed his body and wrapped it in winding sheets, as is fitting for a deceased monk. The departed one lay unburied for two days because of some delay. By night a vision appeared to the abbot, and he heard a voice:

"The man of God Athanasius has lain unburied for two days, and you take no thought for him."

As soon as morning came, the abbot went with the brethren to the dead man to perform his burial—and suddenly they saw him sitting and weeping. All were terrified to see that he was alive, and began to ask him how he had come to life, and what he had seen or heard. In reply, he said only this:

"Save yourselves!"

But they entreated him still more, wishing to hear from him something that might profit them. Then he said to them:

"If I tell you, you will neither believe nor heed me."

The brethren swore to him that they would keep all that he told them. Then the risen man said to them:

"Be obedient in all things to the abbot, repent every hour, and pray to the Lord Jesus Christ and His Most Pure Mother, and to the Venerable Fathers Anthony and Theodosius, that here, in this monastery, you may end your lives and be deemed worthy to be buried with the holy fathers in the cave; for these three virtues are above all others.

And if anyone fulfills all this as is fitting according to the rule, he shall be blessed, provided only that he does not grow proud. Ask me nothing more, but I beseech you: forgive me."

Having said this, he went into the cave and, closing the doors behind him, remained there without ever coming out for twelve years. Never thereafter did he see the sun; unceasingly, day and night, he wept. He ate only a little bread and drank water, and that only every other day, and throughout all this time he spoke not one word to anyone. When the time of Athanasius's death drew near, he summoned the brethren and told them all that he had said before concerning obedience and repentance; then he reposed in peace in the Lord, and was honorably laid in the cave where he had struggled in ascetic labor.[13]

After his repose, the Venerable Athanasius made known to the brethren through a miracle that he was in a blessed state. One of the monks, named Vavila, who had suffered for many years from an ailment of the legs, was carried to the relics of this blessed Athanasius; and, touching his body, he was healed at once. From that time until his death he never suffered from any illness. Vavila thus related to the brethren this manifestation of his venerable healer; among them was the holy Simon, the writer of this Life:[14]

"As I lay crying out from pain, this blessed Athanasius suddenly came in and said to me, 'Come to me, and I will heal you.' I was about to ask him how and when he had come here, but suddenly he became invisible. Believing the one who had appeared to me, I asked to be carried to him, and behold, I have now received healing."

From that time all understood that the Venerable recluse Athanasius had pleased the Lord and been deemed worthy of blessedness. By his holy prayers, may we too, rising from the death of sin, live in a manner pleasing to God and in repentance, and afterward receive eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Life-Giver, to Whom be glory, with God the Father

13. The Blessed Athanasius reposed in the Lord about 1176. His relics rest in the Cave of St. Anthony.

14. St. Simon: at first a monk of the Kiev Caves Monastery, afterwards Bishop of Vladimir, 1220; known as the author of 8 tales about 8 Caves monks, written to his friend, the Caves monk Polycarp, and the "Tale of the Founding of the Caves Monastery." His memory is on May 10.

and the Life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

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Life of St. Stephen, Tsar of Serbia[15]

Житие святого Стефана, царя Сербского

St. Stephen Uroš was the son of the renowned Serbian ruler Stephen Dušan,[16] who, having united almost all the Serbian lands under his power and conquered several provinces belonging to the Greek Empire, proclaimed himself Tsar of the Serbs and Greeks. Stephen Uroš was born[17] of Dušan's marriage to Elena, sister of the Bulgarian Tsar Alexander Asen. Uroš's childhood passed during the most vigorous period of his father's activity. Having assumed the title of Tsar, in 1346 Stephen Dušan was crowned with the imperial crown together with his wife, while his son Uroš, who was only in his tenth year, was crowned with a royal crown; and, granting him the title of king, Dušan called him thus in his charters. Thus from his earliest childhood Uroš became King "the Young," a name that remained with him forever.

Upon the death of his father, Stephen Dušan, which occurred in 1355, Stephen Uroš was crowned emperor at the age of eighteen and had to take charge of the extensive Serbian Empire. This was a very difficult task. Stephen Dušan himself, in order to govern the many provinces with their diverse populations—Serbian, Bulgarian, Albanian, and Greek—had placed them under the authority of nobles, who received from the emperor various titles according to Greek custom: caesar, despot, and others. These nobles, enjoying almost complete independence, could resist the emperor, and a firm hand such as Dušan's was needed to keep them obedient.

Dušan's young successor, Stephen Uroš, was by nature distinguished for bodily beauty, gentleness of soul, and simplicity of mind. It was difficult for him to rule an extensive realm. Like his father, he had

15. The Life is compiled from an ancient Serbian Life, the church service contained in the "Srbljak" (a printed collection of services to Serbian saints), and Serbian chronicles.
16. Stephen Dushan reigned from 1331 to 1355.
17. His year of birth is 1337.

to govern through the nobles, but he lacked the firmness of character and the skill to keep them in due obedience. The rulers of the various provinces began to follow their own will rather than the Tsar's commands. The nobles of the Marjanović family, the brothers Vukašin, Uglješa, and Gojko, gained particular power in the realm. Vukašin first received from the Tsar the title of caesar, and later that of Serbian king, so that he issued royal charters in his own name. Stephen Uroš had no actual power; he was content with the title of Tsar alone. He had to endure much grief, hardship, and humiliation, but bore everything with meekness.

This, however, was not enough for the ambitious nobles: they wished to remove Uroš altogether. King Vukašin, supported by his brothers, strove especially toward this end. Deprived of power, Uroš lived at different times in various Serbian cities and provinces. For a time he lived with Prince Lazar, who, like Vukašin, ruled a province of his own, the Danubian region, but was well disposed toward Uroš.

Outwardly, Vukašin too displayed goodwill toward Uroš and sought to reassure Uroš's mother Elena, still living, the widow of Stephen Dušan, who feared for her son's fate. Wishing to testify to his affection for Uroš, Vukašin once invited him to go hunting with him in the mountainous country near the Field of Kosovo. During this hunt, Vukašin seized an opportunity and treacherously killed Uroš. By night his body was secretly placed in a prepared tomb beside the Church of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos, near the fortress of Petrič, which often served as the residence of Serbian rulers.[18]

Vukašin claimed that Uroš had fallen behind somewhere during the hunt and that he did not know where he was. Stricken with grief, Uroš's mother Elena and his wife Anna[19] took every measure to seek the missing Tsar, but in vain. Yet there is no secret that does not become known. Rumors spread that someone had been buried by night in the Church of the Dormition near Petrič.

When the slab was removed from the tomb, they saw the body of the innocent sufferer, Tsar Stephen Uroš. His mother and wife and all

18. Petrich was situated above Nerodimlje in the *Ezerska Planina*, that is, the mountain range separating Podrinje, the region adjoining the city of Prizren, from the Field of Kosovo.

those around him mourned the departed bitterly, and solemnly performed the burial rite, as befitted a Tsar, in that same Church of the Dormition. Stephen Uroš was the last Serbian Tsar and the last ruler of the renowned house of Nemanjić.

The holy relics of Tsar Stephen Uroš rested for a long time in the church where he had been buried; but later, for fear that they might be profaned by the Muslims, Orthodox Serbian settlers brought them from Turkey to Austrian Srem, to the Monastery of Jasak.

Like all Serbian rulers, Stephen Uroš founded a memorial monastery—the Monastery of the Nativity of the Theotokos in the city of Skopje. The Church service for Stephen Uroš praises him as a saint who "from his youth was devoted to the Lord, fatherly in his care for widows and orphans, pacifying disputes and establishing peace, showing mercy to the poor and defending the oppressed."

* * *

Commemoration of the Venerable John, Heraclemon, Andrew, and Theophilus

Память преподобных Иоанна, Ираклемона, Андрея и Феофила

The Venerable Fathers John, Heraclemon, Andrew and Theophilus, natives of the city of Oxyrhynchus,[20] were the children of Christian parents. From their youth they were diligent in reading edifying books, and then, moved by the desire to live a God-pleasing life, they withdrew into the inner desert of their country,[21] where they were also guided by God. There in the desert they met a holy man who had already reached deep old age, and for one year they lived with him, receiving spiritual instruction from him. When that man died, they remained in the same desert place and for sixty years lived an ascetic life, observing a strict fast. They fed on wild vegetables and water, and even then they partook only twice a week. On weekdays they separated and each spent the time alone in the surrounding mountains and caves;

19. She was the daughter of the Wallachian voivode Alexander Basarab.
20. In Middle Egypt, on the left bank of the river Nile.
21. That is, the Thebaid. The Thebaid desert was situated in Upper (southern) Egypt and was a favorite place for the ascetic labors of the ancient hermits.

but on Saturdays and Sundays they gathered together and offered up their thanksgiving to God in common, and by a Divine Angel they were granted the holy Communion, and so they reposed in peace. This was related by the great Paphnutius the hermit (of Thebaid), who himself saw these men and described their life.[22]

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NOTES

7954. Here is foretold not only the deliverance of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, but also the salvation of the human race. Thus this prophecy is of Messianic character. Pointing to the southern country in relation to Palestine, where the mountain of Paran, covered with shady forest, was located, Habakkuk revealed to the Jews that they would receive deliverance from Babylonian slavery through a people coming from the southern side. Indeed, Cyrus, king of Persia, led the Medes and Persians from the south, in relation to Palestine, and, subduing the Babylonians, freed the Jews. But the prophet's gaze foresaw deliverance from yet another bondage, the sinful bondage of the whole human race, in its renewal. According to the explanation of the blessed Theodoret, Habakkuk by these words "foretells the incarnation of God and our Savior, accomplished in Bethlehem, which lies to the south of Jerusalem." The holy Church, under "the mountain overshadowed," understands the Mother of God, as it were a certain mountain of virtues, overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. "Thee, the mountain overshadowed by the grace of God, Habakkuk the prophet beheld with his eyes," the Church sings in the canon, "foretelling that from Thee would come forth Israel's Holy One, for our salvation and renewal." "Christ, who comes, clearly God our God, shall come and not tarry, from the mountain of the overshadowed thicket, from the Virgin giving birth without knowing man, the prophet of old declared" (Ode 4 of the canon on Palm Sunday). "O Christ, from the Virgin Thou didst spring forth, praised out of the mountain, the overshadowed thicket" (Ode 4 at the Nativity of Christ). In general, the prophecy of Habakkuk concerning the coming of the Lord for the salvation of His people, "to save His anointed ones," is laid as the foundation of the fourth ode of all the Church canons. In view of such clear Messianic meaning of Habakkuk's prophecy, the Christian Church has ascribed to him the title "God-speaking." (Laudatory canon, Ode 4, Irmos.) – The above-cited prayer-song of Habakkuk serves as the basis of the fourth ode of the Church canons, depicting God's omnipotence and the unshamed hope in Him.

22. In the 4th century.

THE THIRD DAY OF DECEMBER

December 3

3 декабря

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

Commemoration of the Holy Prophet Zephaniah

Память святого пророка Софонии

St. Zephaniah, one of the twelve Minor Prophets[1], son of Cushi, grandson of Gedaliah, great-grandson of Amariah, and great-great-grandson of Hezekiah, was, according to tradition, of the tribe of Simeon, from the mountainous country of Sarabatha, or Varatha.[2] He was of noble birth[3] and lived in the days of Josiah, king of Judah, son of Amon, more than 600 years before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to earth. In his time the pious King Josiah, zealously laboring to restore the true worship of God, which the Jews had almost forgotten, rooted out idolatry among his people. He restored the Temple of Solomon, which had fallen into complete disrepair, to its former grandeur; destroyed the pagan altars; put the priests of the idols to death; and commanded all to observe the law of Moses strictly. Yet, despite the king's zeal for restoring the true faith, it was difficult to turn a people already rooted in impiety back to God. The Jews, for fear of the royal authority, ceased openly to serve idols, but in their hearts they concealed their attachment to pagan wickedness. Therefore the Lord, says Holy Scripture, did not turn away from the great fury of His wrath with which He burned against Judah (4 Kgdms. 23:29). The people were ripening for the Judgment of God, which was soon to fall

1. The division of the prophets into *greater* and *lesser* is based not on their personal or spiritual qualities but on the brevity of the books they wrote.
2. The tribe of Simeon, where the mountain Sarabae was situated, occupied the south-western border region of Palestine.
3. This can be affirmed on the ground that Zephaniah enumerates his ancestors at the beginning of the book. According to the custom of that time, only persons noble by birth could do this.

upon them. Amid such impiety and pagan darkness, Zephaniah shone with piety like a bright star in the night. As a true Israelite, he grieved deeply over the impiety of his people; and, as a watchman of the Lord and a seer of the mysteries of God,[4] pure in mind and heart, he prayed fervently that his countrymen might turn to the path of truth and be saved from destruction. And then, as though in answer to this prayer, "the word of the Lord came to Zephaniah" (Zeph. 1:1). God, Who sees the hearts of men, chose him as His prophet and commanded him to proclaim to the Jews the terrible punishments awaiting them for their impiety and service of false gods. Fulfilling the Lord's command, Zephaniah went through the cities and villages of Judah, everywhere urging the people to amend their ways and repent. His preaching was not long, but in its power and depth it recalled the fiery discourses of the great prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah.

"Thus says the Lord," Zephaniah began his prophecy: "I will utterly consume all things from off the face of the earth: I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the air and the fish of the sea, and I will blot out the lawless from off the face of the earth. And I will stretch out My hand against Judah, and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and will destroy those who turn away from the Lord and do not seek Him. Therefore let all fear before the face of the Lord: He is preparing a sacrifice, and its day is already near. This shall be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of confusion and tumult, a day of darkness and gloom. Then men shall walk as though blind, because they have sinned against the Lord; and their blood shall be poured out like sand, and their corpses shall be as dung" (Zeph. 1:2–4, 14–18).

While proclaiming such punishment for the Jews, Zephaniah also foretold the coming destruction of the pagan nations. "The Philistines, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Ethiopians, the Assyrians,[7975]" he said, "shall be destroyed; their lands shall be laid waste and become, like Sodom and Gomorrah, a field overgrown with thorny grass and an everlasting wilderness. This shall befall them for their arrogance, be-

4. Thus is the name of Zephaniah interpreted (*seer of mysteries*), derived from the Hebrew verb *tsafah*, to observe, to watch, or from the verb *tsaphan*, which means to hide, to conceal.

cause they mocked and exalted themselves over the people of God."[5] Turning then once more to his native Jerusalem, the prophet sorrowfully sees that it takes no warning from the punishment of the impious pagan nations and remains obstinate in its error. Jerusalem, in the prophet's words, "receives no correction, hears no voice, hopes not in the Lord, and draws not near to her God. Her princes are roaring lions, her judges evening wolves; her people are proud, her priests profane the holy things and break the law. For this," the prophet said, "the impious city shall be laid waste, and with it the land of Judah shall perish."[6]

But Zephaniah did not limit himself to sorrowful predictions; his prophetic gaze penetrated to those blessed times when the Consolation of Israel and the Hope of the nations would appear, bringing joy and peace to all the earth. Beholding the coming of those times, Zephaniah said that not all Israel, nor all the earth, would be destroyed on the great day of the Lord's judgment. After His terrible punishments, the Lord would give the nations that remained pure lips, that they might call upon His name and serve Him with one accord. And from Israel only the meek and humble would remain, who would stand in reverence before the Lord. This remnant of Israel would no longer do wrong, and for this would rest in peace, troubled by none of its enemies.[7] Pointing to these blessed times, the prophet forgets the terrible and near calamities he has foretold, and cries out in rapture:

"Rejoice, O daughter of Zion; proclaim, O daughter of Jerusalem; adorn thyself and be glad with all thy heart; for the Lord hath taken

5. Zeph. 2:1. These prophecies were fulfilled under Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who conquered, together with the Jews, the Moabites, the Ammonites and the Philistines. Assyria, however, perished under Nebuchadnezzar's father, Nabopolassar.

6. The punishment indeed did not delay in overtaking the wicked. Already under Josiah the Egyptians, then a powerful enemy, invaded. Their king, Pharaoh Necho, in the battle at Megiddo, in the valley of Jezreel (in the south of Palestine), defeated the Jews. The pious Josiah fell in this battle. From this ill-fated day began the punishment of the Jews and the fulfilment of the prophetic threats. Soon after the death of Josiah the Jews were enslaved by the Egyptians and subjected to heavy tribute, and afterwards the Babylonians began to invade Judea. In 607 B.C. their king Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem, destroyed it, and led the people into captivity, where they remained for 70 years. Thus were fulfilled the prophecies of the punishment of the Jews for their impiety.

away all thy transgressions and delivered thee from the hand of thine enemies. The Lord shall reign in the midst of thee, and thou shalt see evil no more. In that day the Lord shall say to Jerusalem: Be of good courage, O Zion, and let not thy hands grow weak, for the Lord thy God is in thee; He is mighty, He shall save thee, and shall bring gladness upon thee and renew thee in His love" (Zeph. 3:14–17).

The Holy Church sees in these words of Zephaniah a clear foretelling of the blessed Messianic times in general, and in particular of the solemn entry of the Lord Jesus Christ into Jerusalem, when all Zion, with branches in their hands and joyful cries of "Hosanna to the Son of David," welcomed Him as the King who was to be in the midst of His people. Therefore, on Palm Sunday, a reading from the book of St. Zephaniah is appointed, namely, the passage in which the prophet speaks of the joyful day awaiting Zion.

Thus Zephaniah prophesied, foretelling the terrible judgments of God to awaken sinners to repentance, and proclaiming the boundless mercies of the Lord—the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth in the days of the Messiah—that he might comfort and strengthen the humble through hope in them.

He reposed in expectation of the general resurrection and, according to tradition, was buried in his own house.

Kontakion, Tone 4:

Thou didst appear radiant with the Divine Spirit, O Prophet Zephaniah, proclaiming the revelation of God: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; proclaim it to Jerusalem: Behold, thy King cometh, saving thee."

* * *

Life of Our Venerable Father John the Silent

Житие преподобного отца нашего Иоанна Молчальника

7. Zeph. 3:9–14. The Blessed Theodoret refers the prophecy of Zephaniah concerning the remnant of Israel to the Apostles, who were meek and humble in heart.

The Silent,[8] worthy of unceasing praise, our holy and Venerable Father John was born in Nicopolis of Armenia,[9] to his father Encratius and his mother Euphemia, in the fourth year of the reign of the pious Emperor Marcian,[10] on the eighth day of January, and was illumined by holy Baptism. John's parents were pious Christians and, because of their wealth and standing, were renowned throughout Armenia. His father was a voivode and held great authority with the emperor, for he enjoyed his full favor; and the blessed John was the son of so illustrious a father. This is said not in order to glorify and praise John for his noble birth—for the saints are glorified for their virtues, not their birth—but that it may be known from what glory and to what humility this servant of God descended.

John was brought up with his brothers in good examples and thoroughly learned the Divine Scriptures. He was still young when his parents departed to the Lord, leaving their children much property. When this property was divided among the brothers, the blessed John used his share to build a church in the city of Nicopolis in the name of the Most Pure and Most Blessed Virgin Mary. Then, renouncing the world, in the eighteenth year of his life he took the monastic habit and lived at this church with ten other monks, striving in the good contest. Throughout his youth he labored greatly to subject the flesh to the spirit, not to be a slave to the belly, and not to allow the passions—especially pride—to master him. He was a man wondrous in virtue, a good and skillful guide and abbot to his brethren.

When John had reached the age of twenty-eight, the bishop of the city of Colonia[11] died. The citizens went to the Metropolitan of Sebaste[12] and asked him to ordain a new bishop. In the election of a per-

8. Men of silence or men of quiet were the venerable men who vowed and fulfilled a vow of voluntary silence. Among the strict keepers of silence, besides the Venerable John, there is also known the Venerable Hesychius, founder of the Athonite skete of the Hesychites, who kept silence for 12 years (his memory on 3 October; on the abstention from speech see Mt. 1:36, Eph. 4:29, 5:3–4, Jas. 3, etc.).

9. Armenia – a region lying west of the Asia Minor peninsula, south of Iberia, or the Caucasus, north of the Tigris and Euphrates. Nicopolis – one of the principal cities of Armenia.

10. Marcian, East Roman emperor, reigned from 450 to 457. Consequently John was born in the year 454.

11. Colonia – a city in Roman Armenia.

son worthy of that dignity, the name of John, abbot of the Nicopolis monastery, was on everyone's lips as one deserving to occupy the throne of the Church of Colonia. Those who knew his great humility supposed that he would not consent to accept the episcopal office; therefore the metropolitan sent for him under the pretext of some ecclesiastical business, and when the saint came, he persuaded him to become a bishop. Then he was consecrated and enthroned on the throne of the Church of Colonia. Having taken up the governance of the Church, John did not change his monastic rule and ascetic labors. Thus he never entered a bath, and did not even wash his body, lest anyone among outsiders should see the nakedness of his body, or lest he himself should ever see himself naked: he remembered the nakedness of Adam[13]. To please God by fasting, prayer, bodily and spiritual purity, to cleanse all his thoughts, to subdue in himself every pride that opposes the mind of God, and to bring his mind into obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5)—this was the whole concern of John. Living so virtuously, he was an example of a good life to others; beholding him, the rest were corrected and began to live virtuously. Among such was Pergamius, his brother according to the flesh, a glorious man who held great honor with the emperor Zeno, and also with Anastasius, who reigned after Zeno[14]. Seeing that his brother, the blessed John, lived a holy life, Pergamius was moved in soul and applied great effort to please God. Also his nephew Theodore, who afterward held great honor with the pious emperor Justinian[15], profited from the angelic life of his uncle. Theodore, with all his household, lived in a God-pleasing manner and was so virtuous that even the emperor and the nobles marveled at his honest life, his wisdom, his right faith, and his mercy. In all this Theodore succeeded, having the example of a blameless life in his blessed uncle John.

The divine and God-bearing Father John had already been bishop for ten years, governing the Church of Christ for its good, when the

12. Sebastia – the principal city of Armenia, situated not far from the source of the river Galion.
13. (Gen. 3:7, 10, 11) The consciousness of nakedness arose in Adam as a consequence of the fall; for Adam's descendants it serves at the same time as a reminder of the forefather's sin and of the sorrowful consequences of this sin for all mankind.
14. Zeno, Greek emperor, reigned from 474 to 491; Anastasius from 491 to 527.

husband of his sister Mary, named Pasinicus, became ruler of Armenia. At the instigation of the devil, he began to disturb the church entrusted to John and to do it harm, and to grieve the blessed man: interfering in church affairs, he forcibly dragged from the churches those who sought refuge there from punishment[16], and did not allow the servants and builders of the Church to attend to church matters. Many times the blessed John humbly asked him not to meddle in church affairs and not to inflict harm and violence upon the Church. But the ruler remained unyielding and did not amend himself; and after the departure of the blessed man's sister from the world, he began to act even worse. Deeply grieved in heart by the harm done to the Church, the saint was obliged to go to Constantinople to the emperor Zeno, and there he found support in the archbishop of Constantinople, Euthymius[17], who by his intercession helped him with the emperor.

Seeing the vanity and turmoil of this world, the blessed John resolved to leave the episcopate and, withdrawing to the holy city of Jerusalem, to labor in stillness for God. Having completed the Divine service, he dismissed the presbyters and clergy who were with him, and he himself, secretly from all, withdrew to the seashore, boarded a ship and sailed to the holy city of Jerusalem. Arriving at the first hospice of the holy city, beside which was a house of prayer in the name of the holy great martyr George, he remained there for some time, disguised as a beggar. Seeing the bustle of the people, John grieved greatly, desired a place of silence, and with tears prayed to God to show him a tranquil place, suitable and convenient for salvation. One night, during fervent prayer about this, he looked up and suddenly saw a most bright star appear, like a cross; it drew near to him, and from the radiance of the star he heard a voice: "If you wish to be saved, follow this light."

The venerable man went at once with joy, and was led by the star to the great Lavra of our venerable and God-bearing Father Sabbas, in

15. Justinian the Great reigned from 527 to 566.
16. The reference is to the right, existing in antiquity, of the persecuted and condemned to seek refuge in churches.
17. Euthymius – Patriarch of Constantinople, 490–496.

the thirty-ninth year of his life, in the time of Sallustius, Patriarch of Jerusalem[18].

John found the venerable Sabbas at the head of one hundred and forty brethren, desert-dwellers, who lived in great bodily poverty but in great spiritual riches. And the venerable Sabbas received the blessed John and ordered the steward to lay monastic labors upon him, not knowing what treasure of divine grace was hidden in John. Although St. Sabbas possessed the gift of foresight, God concealed from him the secret that John was a bishop, that he had left his episcopal see for God and had come to him as a simple man. Let no one marvel that even the far-seeing do not always foresee: for they foresee and prophesy only what God reveals to them, and of what He does not reveal they know nothing. Therefore also the prophet Elisha said to his servant concerning the Shunammite woman: "Let her alone, for her soul is in bitterness; and the LORD hath hid it from me, and hath not told me" (4 Kgdms. 4:27)[19].

Received into the Lavra, John with complete obedience and zeal performed the various obediences assigned him by the steward. At that time a guesthouse was being built in the Lavra, and the blessed John was assigned to serve those who worked on it. He cooked food for them, carried water, passed stones, and took part in all the labors carried out on the building.

Two years after his arrival at the Lavra, John was entrusted with receiving pilgrims; and here he served his neighbors with humility, meekness, and love. Afterward the venerable Sabbas began to build a coenobium[20] for those entering the monastic life, so that those who

18. Sallustius – Patriarch of Jerusalem, 486–494.

19. 4 Kgdms. 4:27. A woman of Shunem, who showed hospitality to the prophet Elisha, had her son die. Stricken with grief, she went to the prophet on Mount Carmel. Seeing her from afar, Elisha sent his servant Gehazi to meet her and ask about the health of her husband and children. When she came up, and, without saying a word, fell at the feet of Elisha in great sorrow, and Gehazi wished to push her away, Elisha addressed him with the words cited above, which showed that the prophet saw the woman's sorrow but did not know its cause.

20. Cenobia (from Greek *koinos*, common, and *bios*, life) are called the cenobitic monasteries, in which the brethren receive not only food but also clothing and the like from the monastery, by the disposition of the abbot, while on their side they are bound to present all their labour and its fruits for the common use of the monastery. Life in these monasteries is not as hard as life in the desert, which is bound up with the complete renunciation of all conveniences.

wished to renounce the world might first be instructed in the coenobium, and only then be received into the Lavra.

"As the flower precedes the fruit," said the saint, "so the coenobitic life must precede the life of the desert; let the one entering flourish like a planted tree with the first fruits of labor in the coenobium, and bring forth the fruit of perfect ascetic achievements in the Lavra."

The venerable Lavra was in the desert; the coenobium was nearer to the world, and when it was being built, the blessed John was again assigned to serve at the works. Then the venerable laborer bore two services at once: he served the pilgrims in the guesthouse, and to the builders of the coenobium he carried on his shoulders bread and various foods; and the coenobium stood more than ten stadia[21] from the guesthouse. When he had labored one year in such service, having served the brethren well, the venerable Sabbas gave him a cell for stillness; in it the blessed John lived three years. Five days a week he remained in his cell without going out, took no food on those days, and showed himself to no one, having communion with God alone; but on Saturday and Sunday he came to church before all others and stood with fear and compunction; streams of tears flowed unceasingly from his eyes during the Divine service, and all the brethren marveled at such a gift of tears in him. On those two days he also took food with the brotherhood. After three years the blessed John was appointed steward; through his labors and service, by the blessing of God, the prosperity of the Lavra greatly increased, for God prospered him in all things.

Seeing that John had performed the office of steward for the good, the venerable Sabbas wished to ordain him to the presbyterate, as a worthy monk who had attained perfection. He went with him to the holy city of Jerusalem, told Patriarch Elias[22] (successor of Sallustius) of the virtuous life of John, and asked that John be ordained a presbyter. The patriarch summoned John into the church and wished to ordain him. Seeing that he could not avoid this, John said to the holy patriarch:

21. Stadion – a Greek measure of length, equal to approximately 88 of our sazhens.
22. From 494 to 517.

"Most honorable father, I have a certain secret matter to speak to your holiness; permit me to speak with you in private, and if you find me worthy of the presbyteral dignity, I will not refuse."

When the patriarch withdrew with him to one side, the venerable John fell at the feet of the God-pleasing Elias, adjuring him not to reveal to anyone the words he would speak to him. The patriarch promised to keep the secret. John said:

"Father! I was bishop of Colonia; for the multitude of my sins I left the episcopate, fled, and, being strong in body, condemned myself to service to the brethren, so that their prayers might help my weak soul."

Patriarch Elias was horrified on hearing this; he called the venerable Sabbas and said:

"John has told me of his hidden affairs, which hinder him from being a presbyter; let him henceforth remain in silence, and let no one trouble him."

So said the patriarch, and he dismissed them both.

The venerable Sabbas was greatly grieved. Withdrawing thirty stadia from his great Lavra into a certain cave, he fell prostrate on the ground before God with tears and said: "Why, O Lord, hast Thou rejected me, concealing from me the life of John? I was deceived in thinking him worthy of the presbyteral dignity! Reveal to me about him at least now, O Lord: 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death' (Mt. 26:38; Mk. 14:34). Is the vessel which I thought chosen, holy, fit, and worthy to receive the myrrh, unworthy and unfit before Thy majesty?"

Thus the venerable Sabbas prayed with tears all night. Then an Angel of God appeared to him and said: "John is not an unworthy but a chosen vessel, but he is a bishop, and cannot be ordained a presbyter."

So said the Angel, and he became invisible. And the venerable Sabbas joyfully hastened to John in his cell, embraced him, and said:

“Father John! You concealed from me what gift of God is in you, but God has revealed it to me.”

“I grieve over this, Father,” John replied. “I wished that no one should know this secret, but you have learned it. I cannot live in this country.”

Sabbas swore to John that he would tell no one his secret. From that time the blessed John began to keep silence, abiding in his cell. He did not even go out to church, spoke with no one, and no one entered to see him except the one novice who served him. Only once did he leave his cell: on the feast of the Most Pure Theotokos, the Ever-Virgin Mary, in whose name the church of the Lavra had been consecrated, when Patriarch Elias came to the Lavra for the feast. John went out to make obeisance to the patriarch. The patriarch loved John and greatly honored him for his humility. For four years John kept silence. Then Venerable Father Sabbas set out for the land of Scythopolis[23] and remained there for a time, while the blessed John, yearning for a still more solitary life in the wilderness, withdrew, in the fiftieth year of his life, to the wilderness called Ruva[24], and spent nine years there, feeding on a plant that grows in that wilderness and is called melagria[25]. Early in his life in the wilderness, while once gathering this plant for food, John lost his way among thickets and ravines; he could not find his shelter and, exhausted from walking, fell down almost lifeless. But suddenly, by the unseen power of God, he was caught up, as once the Prophet Habakkuk had been, and set in his shelter. In time the Venerable learned the paths of that wilderness and discovered that the distance from his shelter to the place where he had lost his way was five stadia[26]. Afterward a brother came to him and stayed with him for a little while. The feast of Pascha was drawing near, and the brother said to the elder:

"Father, let us go to the Lavra and celebrate the day of Pascha there, and then return. It is so great a feast, yet here we have nothing to eat but this melagria!"

23. Scythopolis – a city lying 620 stadia from Jerusalem. At that time it was in a flourishing state and was called the Gate of Paradise, the city of palms and olives. Now it is a poor village in the midst of barren desert.

24. The Judean desert, in which John lived, was divided into several parts. Its inner part, on the north-western shores of the Dead Sea, was called *Ruva*.

25. Melagria – a little-known desert plant of Palestine with a somewhat bitter taste.

26. A *poprishche* – a little more than our verst.

St. John did not wish to go, because Venerable Sabbas had not yet returned to the Lavra from the regions of Scythopolis, and he answered the brother's urging:

"Brother! We must not leave this place. Let us believe that He Who fed six hundred thousand of the people of Israel in the wilderness for forty years will also feed us here, and on the feast of Pascha will send us not only what is necessary, but even abundance. It is written: 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee' (Heb. 13:5); and in the Gospel: 'Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ... for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you' (Mt. 6:31–33). Endure, child, and walk the path of afflictions; bodily ease and indulgence in this world bring forth eternal punishment, but the mortification of the body prepares endless rest."

The brother did not heed these admonitions of the Venerable, but left him and went to the Lavra. After his departure, a man wholly unknown to the Venerable appeared before him; his donkey was laden with many good things: there were pure, warm loaves, wine and oil, fresh cheeses, eggs, and a bucket of honey. The man who had come placed it all before John and immediately departed. Recognizing in this a visitation from God, the Venerable joyfully gave thanks to God. The brother who had gone to the Lavra, however, lost his way, wandered for three days through the wilderness and impassable places, and grew very weary; hungry and thirsty, exhausted from the difficult journey, he could scarcely find his way back to the Venerable's shelter. He was astonished at the abundance of food and drink sent by God to the Venerable for the feast; ashamed of his lack of faith and not daring to look the holy elder in the eyes, he fell at his feet and asked forgiveness. The saint forgave him and said:

"Be assured, brother, that God can prepare a table for His servants even in the wilderness."

At that time Alamundar, a Saracen chieftain[27] subject to Persia, invaded Arabia[28] and Palestine, attacking the inhabitants with great fury

and taking them captive. Many barbarians then scattered throughout the wilderness where John dwelt, and word spread among the monasteries that they should prepare to meet the barbarian invasion. The fathers of the Great Lavra sent word to John the Silent about the barbarians and advised him to return to the Lavra and remain in his cell. But the blessed John, though he was somewhat afraid of the barbarians, was nevertheless unwilling to leave his life of silence in the wilderness. He said within himself: "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). "But if the Lord does not protect me or care for me, why should I live?"

Trusting thus in the help of the Most High, he remained steadfast in his place. But God, Who ever cares for His servants and preserves them in all their ways, desired to keep this servant of His safe and unharmed, and sent him a great and fearsome lion as a guardian, which watched over him constantly, day and night. Whenever the barbarians attacked the saint, this lion would rush upon them with great fury, strike them, and put them to flight. And the blessed John gave thanks to God, "for the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous" (Ps. 124:3).

When Venerable Sabbas returned to his Lavra, he came to the blessed John in the wilderness and said to him:

"Behold, the Lord has preserved you from the barbarian invasion, giving you a visible guardian. Yet you must do as other people do: make ready and flee, as the other fathers of the wilderness have done."

The Venerable one spoke many other words of admonition to John and persuaded him to leave the wilderness. Bringing him to the Great Lavra, he gave him a cell, and the blessed John once more began to live in the Lavra, in the fifty-sixth year of his life.

Apart from the most holy Patriarch Elias and Venerable Sabbas, no one knew John's secret—that he was a bishop—and they kept it hidden. But much time passed, and it pleased God to reveal it to all the brethren. This came about as follows. A certain man named Etherius

27. Saracens is the name commonly given to the Arab marauding tribes wandering in Arabia. Sometimes, however, this name designates all Muslim peoples in general.

arrived from the land of Asia, honored with the rank of archbishop. After making obeisance to the life-giving wood of the Cross of the Lord and to the holy places, and distributing much gold to the poor and the monasteries, he resolved to return to his homeland, left the Holy City, and boarded a ship. After a short voyage, an adverse wind arose at sea and forced Etherius to return to Ascalon[29]. Having stayed there for two days, he wished to set sail again, but an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said:

"Before you sail to your homeland, you must return to the Holy City and go to the Lavra of Abba[30] Sabbas. There you will find Abba John the Silent, a righteous and virtuous man, a bishop who for God's sake has left everything and humbled himself through voluntary poverty and obedience."

On awakening, Etherius returned to Jerusalem, came to the Lavra of Venerable Sabbas, and asked about John the Silent; they showed him John's cell. He entered and stayed with him for two days, beseeching him and adjuring him in the name of God to reveal his lineage, homeland, and episcopal rank. Recognizing in this the will of God, John related everything in detail. From that time the whole Lavra knew that John the Silent was a bishop, and all marveled greatly at his profound humility.

In the seventieth year of John's life[31], on the 5th day of December, Venerable and God-bearing Father Sabbas departed to the Lord. John was not present when the soul of Venerable Sabbas was separated from his body, and he grieved greatly in spirit and wept. But Venerable Sabbas appeared to him in a vision and said:

"Do not grieve over my departure, Father John: though I am separated from you in body, I remain with you in spirit."

John said to him:

"Pray to the Lord, Father, that He may take me with you."

29. Ascalon – a Palestinian city with a harbour, lying on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, 520 stadia from Jerusalem.
30. Abba – father; this title was given chiefly to the heads of monasteries.
31. The Venerable Sabbas reposed in 532.

"This cannot be now," Sabbas replied, "for a great trial awaits the Lavra; and it is pleasing to God that you should serve to strengthen those who will stand against the heretics for the true faith."

This vision and conversation with Venerable Sabbas filled the blessed John with spiritual joy, while his heart grieved over the trial that lay ahead. Later he desired to see how the soul is separated from the body; and when he prayed to God for this, he was caught up in mind to holy Bethlehem[32] and saw the repose of a stranger who lived by the church there. The Angels bore his soul up to heaven with sweet singing. The blessed John saw this with the eyes of his mind. He immediately set out for Bethlehem and found the body of the departed man lying by the church, as had been revealed to him in the vision: this man had reposed at the very hour when John, sitting in his cell, had seen his soul borne up to heaven by the Angels with hymns. John lovingly embraced and kissed the body, buried it in that same place, and returned to his cell.

Two disciples of the blessed John, Theodore and John, related the following to the monk Cyril, who wrote his Life:

After the repose of the Venerable Sabbas, we were sent by our Father on a certain errand to Liviada[33]. As we crossed the Jordan, certain people met us and said: Take care, a lion is before you. But we reasoned: God is strong to keep us through the prayers of our Father, at whose command we are travelling. So we said, and went on. Suddenly we saw a terrible lion coming towards us. We were seized with fear, our strength left us so that we could not flee, and we were as though dead. And then suddenly our Father, the Venerable John, appeared among us, bidding us not to fear. Then the lion, as though driven off by a blow of a whip, fled from us, and the Father became invisible. Having rested, we set out again, unharmed. Having fulfilled the obedience laid upon us, we returned to the Father, and he said to us when we met: You see, children, that I was with you in obedience, and here too I earnestly prayed to God for you, and He has shown mercy to you.

32. Bethlehem – the city in which Jesus Christ was born, south of Jerusalem.
33. Livias – a locality east of the Jordan.

Here is something else that one of John's disciples related to Cyril. This great ascetic for many years fed on bread alone, and instead of salt he customarily used ashes, and ate his bread with ashes. Once he forgot to close the little window of his cell during his meal; a disciple pressed to the window and saw John eating bread with ashes. The elder was grieved that they had seen such abstinence of his, but the disciple, wishing to comfort him, said: "You are not the only one who does this, Father, but many fathers of this Lavra fulfil the word of Scripture: 'I eat ashes like bread' (Ps. 101:10)"; and with this he comforted the elder.

At that time the heresy of Origen arose. Many were seduced by it and troubled the Church of God, while others firmly opposed the heresy, and such found support in the Venerable John the Silent, who then left his stillness and with the word of his mouth, as with a sword, struck down the heretics, cutting down and destroying the blasphemous teachings of Origen. It was concerning this trial, which was to befall the Lavra, that it was foretold to John by the Venerable Sabbas in a vision; for there was no small persecution of the Lavra by the heretics, so that even many of the ascetic fathers, infected by heretical teachings, fell into doubt and wavered in mind. For this reason God was pleased that John should live in that Lavra, to the comfort of the faint-hearted and the strengthening of the weak. At that time there came to him from the district of Scythopolis Cyril, who afterwards wrote his Life. Cyril speaks of himself thus:

"When I wished to leave my home and go to the holy city of Jerusalem, to take up the monastic life in some monastery there, my Christ-loving mother charged me not to begin any work for the salvation of my soul without the counsel and command of the Blessed John. 'So that you do not, in some way,' she said, 'succumb to the heresy of Origen and fall at the beginning of your struggle.' On reaching Jerusalem I came to the Lavra of St. Sabbas, bowed to the most blessed John, opened my thoughts to him, and asked him for useful counsel. He said to me:"

"If you wish to be saved, go to the monastery of the great Euthymius."

I went away from him and, being young and unwise, did not obey his command; but on reaching the Jordan I entered the monastery called Arundinitic (of the reeds). My journey was not favourable; I fell into a grave illness, and grief and anguish seized me because I was a stranger and weak in body. Then the Venerable John appeared to me in a dream and said:

"Since you disobeyed me, you have been punished with this illness. Now rise and go to Jericho[34]; there, in the guesthouse of Abba Euthymius, you will find a certain old monk; follow him to the monastery of Euthymius, and you will be saved."

Immediately waking, I felt myself fully healthy, and went, at the command of the holy father, to Jericho; there I found, as he had told me, an old monk, virtuous and prudent, who led me to the monastery of Euthymius the Great, where I settled. I often went also to the Lavra of St. Sabbas to the Venerable John and received from him great profit for my soul. Once I was troubled and burdened by satanic thoughts, but when I confessed them to the Venerable, by his holy prayers I at once received relief, and peace returned to my heart.

Thus the monk Cyril related of himself. This same Cyril the Venerable John sent to the Lavra of Suki with books to the Venerable Cyriacus the hermit[35].

Once Cyril was sitting at the little window of the Venerable John's cell. And then there came a certain man, named George, leading his son, who was tormented by a demon, and set him down before the window and himself went away. St. John perceived that the lying and weeping boy was possessed by an unclean spirit; moved by compassion, he made a prayer and anointed him with holy oil, and at once the unclean spirit left the boy, and from that hour he was well.

Abba Eustathius, who struggled after Sergius in the cave of the Venerable Sabbas, a spiritual and pious man, related of himself:

"Once a spirit of blasphemy came upon me and greatly troubled me with blasphemous thoughts against God and things divine, and I was in

34. Jericho – one of the most ancient cities of Palestine – lay at a distance of 6 hours' journey from Jerusalem, on the western bank of the Jordan.

great sorrow. I came to the Blessed John the Silent, told him my affliction, and had recourse to the help of his holy prayers. John prayed for me to God and then said to me: 'Blessed be God, my child! No blasphemous thought will come near you any more.' The elder's words were fulfilled, for from that time I have not experienced a blasphemous thought in myself."

A certain woman, a native of Cappadocia[36], named Basilina, deaconess[8008] of the holy Church of Constantinople, came to Jerusalem with her nephew, a man of rank; he was indeed a virtuous man, though he held to the error of Severus[37] and therefore was not in communion with the holy Catholic Church. The pious deaconess took great pains to turn him to right belief and join him to the holy Church, and zealously asked each of the holy fathers to pray to God for him. Having heard of St. John, she wished also to bow to him; but when she learned that women do not enter the Lavra, she summoned Theodore, a disciple of John, and asked him to lead the man who had come with her to the holy elder. She believed that God, through John's prayers, would soften the hard heart of the man of wrong opinion and make him worthy of communion with the Catholic Church. Theodore took the man who was injured by heresy, came with him to the elder, bowed according to custom, and said:

"Bless us, Father!"

Then the elder said to the disciple:

"I will bless you, but there is no blessing for the one who came with you."

"No, Father," replied the disciple, "bless us both."

The elder answered:

35. His memory on 29 September. The Lavra of Souka (called in Syriac, and in Greek the Old Lavra) was founded by the Venerable Chariton in the first half of the 4th century, and was situated in a wild, remote region of the Judean desert.

36. Cappadocia – the easternmost province of Asia Minor, the homeland of the great fathers and teachers of the Church: Gregory of Nazianzus, Bishop of Neocaesarea.

37. *Severus* – Patriarch of Antioch from 512 to 518, one of the moderate representatives of the Monophysite heresy, who acknowledged in Christ only one Divine nature, which, as it were, completely swallowed up in Him the human nature. But Severus, while insisting on the single nature of Christ, nevertheless admitted a distinction within it of divine and human properties, and acknowledged that the flesh of Christ before the Resurrection was, like ours, corruptible.

"No, I will not bless the other until he renounces his evil heretical thinking and promises to join the Catholic Church."

The man of wrong opinion marvelled at the elder's gracious insight; this wonder produced a change in him, and he did indeed promise to join the orthodox. Then the elder blessed him, resolved by his God-inspired instructions all the doubts of his heart, gave him Communion of the Most Pure Mysteries, and dismissed him in peace, having turned him to orthodoxy. Learning of this, the pious deaconess Basilina was filled with an even stronger desire to see the holy elder with her own eyes. She resolved to put on men's clothing, come to him at the Lavra, and confess her thoughts. Informed by an Angel of Basilina's intention, the elder sent to her to say:

"Know that even if you come to me as you intend, you will still not see me; therefore do not trouble yourself, but remain where you now are, and I will appear to you in a dream, hear what you wish to say to me, and myself say what God shows me to tell you."

The deaconess was struck with such foresight of the Venerable John, that he saw human thoughts from afar, and she remained, awaiting his appearance. On one of the nights the Venerable appeared to her in a dream and said:

"Behold, God is sending me to you; now tell me, what do you desire?"

She confessed to him her thoughts and received from him the fitting healing of soul. Having given her instruction, the Venerable became invisible, and Basilina, awaking, gave thanks to God.

The place where the Venerable's cell stood was rocky and dry; the hardness of the soil, wholly lacking moisture, did not allow tree or grass to grow there. Once the Venerable took a fig seed[38] and said to his disciples Theodore and John:

"Listen to me, children: if, by the grace of God, this seed sprouts on this hard stone, puts forth branches, and bears fruit, then know that God grants me a place of repose in the Kingdom of Heaven."

Having said this, he planted the seed on the stone near his cell. God, by whose will the dry staff of Aaron flourished, gave moisture to the

hard stone and growth to the fig seed, to show what grace His faithful servant has with Him. From the earth a fig tree grew and, rising gradually, reached even the roof of the cell, then covered the whole cell with its branches, and in time bore fruit, three figs. Taking them, the elder, with tears, thanked God, kissed them, and ate them with the disciples. After eating those figs, he began to prepare for his end, though already in deep old age[39].

Having lived a full hundred and four years, he reposed[8012] in the Lord our Saviour, to Whom be glory forever. Amen.

* * *

Repose of the Venerable Sabbas of Storozhi

Преставление преподобного Саввы Сторожевского

Our Venerable Father Sabbas, from his earliest years, loved Christ and hated the world. He came to the Venerable Sergius of Radonezh and received the tonsure from him. In the monastic habit, striving after the heavenly blessings prepared by the Lord for those who please Him, he struggled with the passions with especial zeal and exercised himself in the virtues. He endured many temptations and snares from the demons, but with the help of God he overcame them all, remaining unceasingly in fasting, vigil, prayer and other spiritual labors.

Having been established in the virtues, Venerable Sabbas acquired a good reputation and the respect of princes. The Christ-loving Prince George Dimitrievich[40] came to the monastery of the Venerable to the blessed Sabbas and besought him to establish a monastery in his patrimony, in a suitable place. Then Sabbas left the monastery of the Venerable Sergius and settled in a desert place on the mountain called Storozhi, at the headwaters of the Moskva River, near Zvenigorod,

38. *Fig tree* – a very widespread tree in Judea, with broad leaves, which bore very tasty fruit, the figs.

39. Venerable John the Silent reposed in the year 558. His relics, as if alive, were seen by the Russian pilgrim Hegumen Daniel at the Monastery of St. Sabbas the Sanctified at the beginning of the twelfth century.

40. Prince of Zvenigorod, the younger son of the Grand Prince of Moscow Demetrius Donskoi.

some 50 versts from the reigning city of Moscow; this place he chose for the future monastery. Here St. Sabbas lived in complete silence and solitude, enduring cold and heat. Not for long, however, was the Venerable to live alone. The report of his ascetic labors and holy life began to spread quickly, and monks and laymen came to St. Sabbas from everywhere, asking him to guide them in the spiritual life. The Venerable received all who came to him with love, setting them an example in humility and monastic labors: he himself drew water from the river, carried it on his shoulders up the high mountain, and performed other necessary works. By this he wished to accustom the brethren to labor, so that they would not waste their days in idleness, which is the mother of all vices.

After this, the Christ-loving Prince George Dmitrievich gave the Venerable the necessary means for the construction of a church, and Sabbas raised a church in honor of the honorable and glorious Nativity of the Most Pure Mother of God and established a monastery, wondrous and great, for the soul-saving dwelling of monks in it.

The Venerable was a good shepherd of the flock of Christ gathered in this monastery, and, leading it to spiritual pasture, he established it in many virtues. Having reached advanced years, St. Sabbas fell ill, and, calling the brethren together, he taught them from the Divine Scriptures, exhorting them to keep bodily purity, to live in love among themselves, to adorn themselves with humility, and to remain unceasingly in fasting and prayers. After this the Venerable, setting over them as abbot one of his disciples, commanded all the brethren to remain in obedience and submission to the abbot. Having given peace to all and the last kiss, St. Sabbas, in a good confession, yielded his soul into the hands of God on the 3rd day of the month of December[41].

The news of the repose of the holy servant of God quickly spread through the surroundings, and all the Christ-loving citizens of Zvenigorod, both the notables and the common people, gathered with great love for the burial of the departed saint, bringing with them the infirm and the sick. Having performed the funeral chant over the departed,

41. In the year 1407.

they honorably buried him in the church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos which he had built. The honorable relics of the Venerable Sabbas to this day pour forth many and various healings to all who come to them in faith, to the glory of Christ our God, who works through His saints, and after their repose, most glorious wonders. To our Lord be glory, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Tale of the Miracles of the Venerable Sabbas

Many years after the death of St. Sabbas, the abbot of his monastery, Dionysius, once at night, having performed the customary rule, lay down to sleep. And there appeared to him an honorable monk, comely and adorned with gray hairs, and said to him: "Dionysius, arise quickly and paint my image."

Dionysius asked the elder:

"Who are you, father, and what is your name?"

The radiant elder answered:

"I am Sabbas, the founder of this place."

Awaking from his sleep, Dionysius immediately called a certain elder named Avvakum, who had been one of the disciples of the Venerable Sabbas, and asked what the blessed Sabbas had looked like. Avvakum told the abbot what his father and teacher had looked like and at what age he had died. The abbot said to him:

"Just such did the Venerable Sabbas appear to me this night, and commanded me to depict him on an icon."

Since Dionysius was himself an iconographer, he hastened to paint the icon of the Venerable Sabbas.

A demoniac named Judas was brought to the monastery of the Venerable Sabbas. During the celebration of a moleben to St. Sabbas, the demoniac cried out:

"It is grievous to me: I am burning," and he at that very moment became well.

When he was asked why he had cried out so loudly, he said:

"I saw a radiant elder. He stood upon the tomb of the Venerable Sabbas, held a cross, and signed me with it. From this cross a great flame appeared and scorched me all over. That is why I cried out, and by this flame the unclean spirit was driven from me."

Once the monks of the monastery of St. Sabbas murmured against their abbot Dionysius. They composed a false denunciation against him to the Grand Prince John. The prince believed their slander and ordered the abbot to present himself to him at once. Learning of this, the abbot was in great sorrow. And then at night in a dream the blessed Sabbas appeared to him and said:

"Why do you grieve, brother? Go to the Grand Prince and speak boldly to him; do not give way to doubt, for the Lord God will be with you and will send you help."

The servant of God also appeared to some of those who had murmured against the abbot and said to them:

"Did you withdraw from the world in order to accomplish your ascetic labor in murmuring? You murmur, while the abbot prays for you with tears: which will prevail, your slanders or your father's prayers?"

When the abbot and the brethren appeared before the prince and gave their explanations at the trial, the slanderers were put to shame, and the abbot returned to the monastery with honor.

One of the monks of the monastery of the Venerable Sabbas suffered for a long time and grievously from an affliction of the eyes, and could not look upon the light at all. He came to the tomb of St. Sabbas, fell on his knees before it, and with tears besought healing. He began to wipe his sick eyes with the cloth that lay upon the tomb of the holy servant of God. Seeing this, another monk who stood there began to revile him, saying:

"You will not receive healing, but will only cover your eyes with even more dust and sand."

The monk who had fallen with faith before the tomb of St. Sabbas received healing, while the brother who had mocked him was suddenly struck with blindness and heard a voice saying to him:

"You have received what you sought, so that through you others may be taught not to laugh at and not to blaspheme the wonders that proceed from the servant of God."

Then the one who had been blinded, with great fear and weeping, fell before the tomb of the Venerable Sabbas and asked forgiveness,

which he received, but not at once, only after many prayers, tears and repentance.

Once, at night, thieves came to the monastery intending to rob the church of the Most Pure Theotokos. But when they approached the window above the tomb of the Venerable, suddenly before them there appeared an enormous mountain, to ascend which was altogether impossible. Immediately fear and trembling seized them, and they went away with empty hands. All this the thieves themselves afterward related, coming to the monastery in repentance, and they spent the rest of their lives in penance.

After that there came to the monastery a certain boyar, Ivan Rtishchev, bringing on a bed his sick son George, who from great weakness could no longer speak. Having performed a moleben chant for George's health, the monks poured monastery kvass into the mouth of the sick man. The sick man at once began to speak, ate bread from the monks' table, and became well. Greatly gladdened by the healing of his son, the father gave great thanks to God and to His servant, St. Sabbas, and said to the Venerable, as though he were alive:

"Venerable father! In my house there are many male and female slaves who suffer from various ailments; I believe that if you will, you can heal them too."

Having asked the abbot for kvass, the boyar returned with his healed son. When he arrived at his house, he ordered one of his slave women, named Irene, who suffered from deafness and blindness, to be brought before him, poured monastery kvass into her ears and anointed her blind eyes with it. At once Irene began to see and to hear. All stood in astonishment at the greatness of God. Likewise, calling one of his slaves, Artemius, who for seven years had suffered from deafness, the boyar poured the same kvass into his ears, and the slave received healing. After this he brought a blind maiden, named Kikilia, and she received healing as soon as her eyes were anointed with the kvass. But all such wonders were accomplished not by the kvass, but through the prayers of the Venerable Sabbas and by the great faith of the boyar Ivan. After some time the boyar himself fell ill. Using the same remedy, he too received healing.

The abbot of the monastery of the Venerable Sabbas of Storozhev, Misail, fell grievously ill and, having lost all hope of recovery, lay at the point of death. Once the sacristan of the monastery, Gury, was going to ring for Matins. As he passed by the doors of the church, a radiant elder met him and began to question him:

"How is the health of your abbot?"

Gury told him of the abbot's illness. Then the radiant elder said:

"Go and tell the abbot to turn with a prayer for help to the Most Holy Theotokos and to the head of this place, the elder Sabbas — then he will recover; and you, brother, open the doors for me, and I will enter the church."

Gury was doubtful, and did not wish to open the doors before the ringing, yet he did not dare to ask the elder who he was and whence he came. The elder who had appeared, saying no more words, went to the church doors. The doors at once opened of themselves, and the elder entered the church through them. Gury, in fear, returned to his cell and began to reproach his companion:

Why did you not lock the church doors in the evening? Just now I saw an unknown man enter the church through the open doors.

But Gury's helper swore that he had locked the doors of the church securely in the evening. Then they lit candles, hurried to the church, and found the doors well locked, for Gury's helper had indeed closed the doors in the evening and locked them carefully. At the end of Matins, Gury related to the brethren everything that he had seen and heard. All unanimously concluded that the elder who had appeared was St. Sabbas himself. Hegumen Misail, hearing of this, ordered himself to be carried to the tomb of the Venerable Father, and, earnestly praying for healing, by the prayers of the Most Holy Theotokos and of the Venerable Sabbas, became entirely well.

Many other wonders and healings have been wrought at the tomb of the Saint of God. And now they are granted to those who come with faith, by the grace of God and through the prayers of the Most Holy Theotokos and of the Venerable Sabbas, whom let us also pray to, that he may heal our spiritual and bodily infirmities by his warm interces-

sion before Christ the Lord our God, to Whom be glory unto ages. Amen.

Troparion, Tone 8:

Thou didst appear as a goodly shoot in the desert, O Venerable Father, for from thy youth thou didst choose the pure life, following thy spiritual teacher and fixing thy mind on the heavenly by his teaching; and thou wast shown to be a wise shepherd of thy flock. Wherefore Christ, as a most bright lamp, hath enriched thee with miracles: O our Father Sabbas, pray that our souls may be saved.

Kontakion, Tone 2:

Kindled with desire for the Lord, and shaking off the passions of the flesh by abstinence, thou didst appear as the unsetting light of the divine radiance: thou dost illumine all who come to the shrine of thy relics with the rays of miracles, O Venerable Father Sabbas.

* * *

NOTES

7975. *Philistines* – a people neighbouring the Jews, who occupied the western part of Palestine along the very shore of the Mediterranean Sea. They descended from Casluhim and Caphtorim, sons of Mizraim, son of Ham, progenitor of the Egyptians (Gen. 10:14; Deut. 2:23; 1 Chron. 1:12; Jer. 47:4; Amos 9:7). They were not native inhabitants of Palestine, but newcomers, settlers, as the very word *Pelishtim* (Philistines) – to wander, to migrate – shows. Descending from the Casluhites and Caphtorites, who lived in some part of northern Egypt, the Philistines in remote antiquity migrated first to the island of Crete, and afterwards to Palestine. *Moabites* – a people of the Semitic race, descendants of Moab, the illegitimate son of Lot by his elder daughter (Gen. 19:30–37). They occupied mountainous but fertile and fruitful lands on the eastern side of the Dead Sea. On the west their border was the Dead Sea, and on the east the desert. *Ammonites* – a people related to the Moabites, descended from Ammon, son of Lot, and his younger daughter Ben-ammi (Gen. 19:38). They lived on the eastern side of the Jordan, near the mountains of Gilead, between the rivers Jabbok and Arnon. *Ethiopians* or *Cushites* descended from Cush or Chus, son of Ham. In antiquity the name Ethiopians was given to all peoples of dark complexion (of north-eastern Africa and south-western Asia); but later this name came to be appropriated to the inhabitants properly of Ethiopia, which lay south of Egypt, between the Red Sea, the Libyan steppe and the Abyssinian highlands. *Assyrians* – a people of the Semitic race, descended from Asshur, son of Shem, son of Noah. Their kingdom, one of the most powerful in all of

Asia, occupied the regions along the river Tigris, between Armenia, Mesopotamia, Media and Babylonia.

8008. *Deaconess* – from the Greek. This was the name of a special order of ministering persons in the Church, whose institution goes back to Apostolic times (Rom. 16:1; 1 Tim. 5:3–10). Women chosen to the office of deaconess were elderly virgins or widows (not younger than forty years of age). Their duties were to instruct women and maidens who came forward, as to how they should conduct themselves during baptism; to assist the bishop at their baptism, and in his place to anoint those parts of the body other than the forehead, and so forth; to oversee order and decorum among the women during divine services; to visit the sick and the needy, and those imprisoned in dungeons; to minister to confessors and martyrs held under guard; to aid the destitute, and the like. At the Church of Constantinople there were up to forty deaconesses. Concerning deaconesses there are several canonical rules, namely: Rule 15 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, Rule 14 of the Fourth Council, and Rule 44 of St. Basil the Great.

8012. When the saint had reached deep old age, his disciple opened his cell in order to serve him. "Then I," he relates, "entering his cell and seeing a terrible miracle with the plant, carefully considered how it had taken root, and whether there was a crack in the stone, but could not find one, so that in amazement I said: 'O depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!' (Rom. 11:33). For those who have long lived in the Lavra know that neither in an open nor in an enclosed place does a fig tree or any other tree grow, because of the great heat and dryness of the air of the Lavra. If anyone points to the trees of the small coenobium of the Lavra, which are by the road, let him know that they are the work of the prayer of the blessed Sabbas, who found deep soil and abundant waters of the winter stream; and likewise the work of the fathers of the coenobium, who to this day water those trees throughout the whole winter with water from the stream; moreover, many have labored over the trees by the stream, where there was deep soil, and, watering them throughout a whole winter, could scarcely obtain growth in a year, because of the dryness and the great heat."

THE FOURTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 4

4 декабря

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

Life and Passion of the Holy Great Martyr Barbara

Житие и страдание святой великомученицы Варвары

In the reign of Maximian,[1] the impious Roman emperor, there lived in the East, in Heliopolis,[2] a man of noble birth, wealthy and renowned, named Dioscorus, a pagan both by origin and by religion. He had a daughter, Barbara, whom he guarded as the apple of his eye, for besides her he had no other children. When she began to come of age she became exceedingly beautiful of countenance, so that in all that region there was no maiden comparable to her in beauty. For this reason Dioscorus had a tall and skillfully built tower constructed for her, and in the tower he fashioned magnificent chambers. In these he shut up his daughter, appointing trustworthy governesses and servants to attend her, for her mother had already died. He did this so that her beauty might not be seen by common and lowborn people, for he thought that their eyes were unworthy to behold the fair face of his daughter. Living in the tower, in the high chambers, the maiden found consolation in looking down from that height upon the heavenly and earthly creatures of God: upon the luminaries of heaven and the beauty of the terrestrial world. Once, gazing at the sky and observing the radiance of the sun, the course of the moon and the beauty of the stars, she asked the governesses and servants who lived with her:

1. Here is meant Maximian Galerius, son-in-law and co-ruler of the Emperor Diocletian in the eastern half of the Roman Empire, and then his successor, from 305 to 311 A.D.

2. Here is meant Heliopolis of Phoenicia, north of Palestine, in Coele-Syria, in the present Syrian region of Asiatic Turkey; in remote antiquity it was the principal seat of the worship of the Phoenician pagan god Baal and the central point of all Eastern paganism, but at the end of the 4th century it became a nursery of Christianity; afterwards this city was gradually destroyed.

"Who made this?"

Likewise, looking upon the beauty of the earth, the fields clothed in green, the groves and gardens, the mountains and waters, she asked:

"By whose hand has all this been created?"

They said to her:

"All this was created by the gods."

The maiden asked:

"What gods?"

The servants answered her:

"Those gods whom your father honors and keeps in his palace, golden, silver and wooden, and whom he worships; they created all that is before your eyes."

Hearing such words from them, the maiden doubted, and reasoned with herself:

"The gods whom my father honors were made by human hands: the golden and silver ones were made by a goldsmith, the stone ones by a stonecutter, the wooden ones by a woodcarver. How then could these made gods have created so bright and lofty a heaven and such earthly beauty, when they cannot walk on their feet nor do anything with their hands?"

Reflecting in this way, she often gazed at the sky, both by day and by night, seeking to know the Creator from His creation. Once, when she had gazed at the sky for a long time and was seized with a strong desire to know who had made so beautiful a height, breadth and brightness of heaven, suddenly a light of divine grace shone in her heart and opened the eyes of her mind to the knowledge of the One, Invisible, Unknown and Incomprehensible God, who wisely created heaven and earth. She said to herself:

"There must be one such God, not made by human hand, but Himself possessing His own being, who by His own hand created all things. There must be One who stretched out the breadth of the heavens, established the foundation of the earth, and from on high illumines the whole universe with the rays of the sun, the radiance of the moon and the shining of the stars, and below adorns the earth with various trees

and flowers and waters it with rivers and springs. There must be one God who sustains all things, gives life to all and cares for all."

Thus the maiden Barbara learned from creation to know the Creator, and the words of David were fulfilled in her: "I meditate on all Thy works, I muse on the works of Thy hands" (Ps. 142:5). In such meditations the fire of divine love was kindled in Barbara's heart and inflamed her soul with a burning longing for God, so that she had no rest by day or by night, thinking of only one thing, desiring only one thing: to know exactly about God and the Creator of all. Among men she could find no teacher who would open to her the mysteries of the holy faith and guide her on the path of salvation, for no one could enter to her except the appointed servants, because her father Dioscorus had surrounded her with a vigilant guard. But the Most Wise Teacher and Instructor Himself, the Holy Spirit, by inward inspiration unseen instructed her in the mysteries of His grace and imparted to her mind the knowledge of truth. And the maiden lived in her tower like a solitary bird upon the roof,[3] meditating on the heavenly and not the earthly, for her heart did not cleave to anything earthly; she loved neither gold, nor costly pearls and precious stones, nor festive garments, nor any adornments of maidens; she never thought of marriage, but her whole thought was turned toward the One God, and she was captivated by love for Him.

When the time came to give the maiden in marriage, many rich, noble and distinguished youths, having heard of Barbara's wondrous beauty, asked Dioscorus for her hand. Going up into the tower to Barbara, Dioscorus began to speak to her of marriage, and pointing out to her various good suitors, asked with which of them she would wish to be betrothed. Hearing such words from her father, the chaste maiden blushed, ashamed not only to listen but even to think of marriage. She refused it in every way, not yielding to her father's desire, for she considered it a great loss to let the flower of her purity wither and to lose the priceless pearl of virginity. In answer to her father's insistent exhortations to submit to his will, she argued much with him and at last declared:

3. A saying from the Psalter. Cf. Ps. 101.

"If, my father, you still speak of this and force me to betrothal, you will no longer be called a father, for I shall kill myself, and you will lose your only child."

Hearing this, Dioscorus was struck with horror and went out from her, no longer daring to press her toward marriage. He thought it better to betroth her of her own free will rather than by compulsion, and hoped that the time would come when she would come to her senses herself and wish to marry. After this he planned to set out on a distant journey on business, supposing that Barbara would be lonely without him, and that when he returned it would be easier for him to persuade her to obey his command and counsel. Before setting out, Dioscorus ordered a luxurious bathhouse to be built beside the bathing pool in the garden, and that two windows facing south be made in the bathhouse. To those appointed over his daughter he gave orders that they should not hinder her from coming down freely from the tower wherever she wished, and from doing whatever pleased her. Dioscorus thought that his daughter, conversing with many people and seeing that many maidens were betrothed and had entered marriage, would herself desire to marry.

When Dioscorus had set out, Barbara, taking advantage of the freedom to leave the house and to converse with whomever she wished without hindrance, befriended some Christian maidens and from them heard the Name of Jesus Christ. She rejoiced in spirit at that Name and strove to learn more exactly about Him from them. Her new friends told her all about Christ: of His unutterable Divinity, of His incarnation from the Most Pure Virgin Mary, of His voluntary suffering and resurrection, also of the future judgment, of the eternal torment of idolaters and the unending blessedness of believing Christians in the Kingdom of Heaven. Hearing all this, Barbara felt sweetness in her heart, burned with love for Christ, and desired to receive baptism. It happened at that time that a presbyter came to Heliopolis in the guise of a merchant. Learning of him, Barbara invited him to her and secretly learned from him the knowledge of the One Creator of all and the Almighty God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, for which she had long ardently longed. The presbyter, having expounded to her all

the mysteries of the holy faith, baptized her in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and having instructed her, departed to his own country. Enlightened by baptism, Saint Barbara was kindled with still greater love for God, and labored in fasting and prayer day and night, serving her Lord, to Whom she had become espoused, having vowed to keep her virginity undefiled.

Meanwhile the building of the bath proceeded according to Dioscorus' command. Once Saint Barbara came down from her tower to look at the construction, and seeing two windows in the bath, she asked the workmen:

"Why have you made only two windows? Would it not be better to make three? Then the wall would be more beautiful and the bath brighter."

The workmen answered:

"So your father commanded us, that we make two windows facing south."

But Barbara insistently demanded that they make three windows (in the image of the Holy Trinity). And when they did not wish to do this, fearing her father, she said to them:

"I will intercede for you before my father and answer for you; but you do what I command you."

Then the workmen, at her wish, made a third window in the bath. There was there, as has been said, a bathing-pool, beside which the bath was being built. This pool was lined with hewn marble stones. Saint Barbara, once coming to this pool and looking toward the east, traced with her finger on the marble the image of the holy Cross, which so clearly impressed itself upon the stone as if it had been struck with iron. Moreover, at the same bath, also on the stone, the print of her maiden foot was left, and from this print water began to flow, and afterwards many healings took place here for those who came with faith.[4]

Walking once through the chambers of her father, Saint Barbara saw his gods, lifeless idols, standing in places of honor, and sighed deeply over the perdition of the souls of those people who serve idols. Then she spat upon the faces of the idols, saying:

"May all who worship you and expect help from you, lifeless things, become like you!"

Having said this, she went up to her tower. There, according to custom, she gave herself to prayer and fasting, immersing herself with all her mind in contemplation of God.

Meanwhile her father returned from his journey. Inspecting the buildings of the house, he came to the newly built bath, and seeing three windows in its wall, he began to rebuke the servants and workmen angrily, asking why they had disobeyed his command and made three windows instead of two. They answered:

"It was not our choice, but your daughter Barbara's: she ordered us to make three windows, although we did not wish it."

Dioscorus at once summoned Barbara and asked her:

"Why did you order a third window to be made in the bath?"

She replied:

"Three is better than two. You, my father, ordered two windows to be made, as it seems to me, corresponding to the two heavenly luminaries, the sun and the moon[5], so that they might light the bath. But I ordered a third to be made, in the image of the Trinitarian Light, for the inaccessible, unspeakable, unsetting and unwaning Trinitarian Light has Three Windows, by which every man coming into the world is enlightened[6]."

The father was perplexed by these new and truly wondrous, but to him incomprehensible, words of his daughter. Leading her to the place in the bath where the sign of the cross, which he had not yet examined,

4. And the bath with three windows, built in the image of the Holy Trinity, and the marble stone at the spring with the image of a cross, and the footprint of St. Barbara – all this was preserved intact until the time of Symeon Metaphrastes, who, after John of Damascus, described the sufferings of this holy martyr. In his account he speaks of this as follows: "To this day this spring exists, healing all sicknesses among Christ-loving people; if one were to compare it with the streams of the Jordan or the spring of Siloam, or with Bethesda, he would not err from the truth, for in this spring the power of Christ likewise works many wonders."

5. The Phoenicians worshipped chiefly the heavenly luminaries. Their principal deities were Baal, or Moloch, in whose person they deified the sun, and Astarte, in whose person they deified the moon.

6. The Three Hypostases or Persons of the One God, glorified in the Trinity, are meant.

had been traced on the stone by the finger of St. Barbara, Dioscorus began to question her:

"What is it you are saying? In what way does the light of three windows enlighten every man?"

The Saint answered:

"Listen attentively, my father, and understand what I am saying: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Three Persons of the one God in the Trinity, who dwells in inaccessible light, enlighten and quicken every breath. For this reason I ordered three windows to be made in the bath, so that one of them should depict the Father, another the Son, and the third the Holy Spirit, that even the very walls might glorify the Name of the Holy Trinity."

Then, pointing with her hand to the cross depicted on the marble, she said:

"I have also depicted the sign of the Son of God: by the good pleasure of the Father and with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, He became incarnate of the Most Pure Virgin for the salvation of men, and of His own will suffered on the cross, the image of which you see. I have traced here the sign of the cross so that the power of the cross may drive away from this place all the power of the devils."

This and much more the wise maiden still told her hard-hearted father concerning the Holy Trinity, the incarnation and passion of Christ, the power of the cross and the other mysteries of the holy faith, and with this she brought him into terrible fury.

Dioscorus blazed with anger and, forgetting his natural love for his daughter, drew his sword and wished to pierce her, but she fled. With sword in hand Dioscorus pursued her as a wolf pursues a sheep. He was already overtaking the immaculate Lamb of Christ when a rocky mountain unexpectedly barred her path. The Saint did not know where to flee from the hand and sword of her father, or rather, of her tormentor; she had one refuge only, God, to whom she lifted up the eyes of her soul and body, asking for help and protection. The Most High quickly heard His servant and hastened to her aid, commanding the rocky mountain to split in two before her, as once before the first martyr Thecla, when she fled from the lecherous men. The Holy Virgin Bar-

bara hid herself in the cleft that formed, and at once the rock closed behind her, giving the Saint a free path upward on the mountain. Having climbed there, she hid herself in a cave. The cruel and obstinate Dioscorus, not seeing his fleeing daughter before him, was amazed. Puzzled as to how she had vanished from his sight, he searched for her diligently for a long time. Going around the mountain and looking for Barbara, he saw on the mountain two shepherds tending flocks of sheep. These shepherds had seen St. Barbara go up the mountain and hide in a cave. Approaching them, Dioscorus asked whether they had seen his fleeing daughter. One of the shepherds, a compassionate man, seeing that Dioscorus was filled with wrath, did not wish to betray the innocent maiden and said:

"I did not see her."

But the other, silently, pointed with his hand to the place where the Saint was hiding. Dioscorus rushed there, while the shepherd who had betrayed the Saint was struck by the judgment of God on that very spot: he himself was turned into a pillar of stone, and his sheep into locusts.

Having found his daughter in the cave, Dioscorus began to beat her mercilessly; throwing her to the ground he trampled her with his feet, and, seizing her by the hair, dragged her to his house. Then he shut her up in a narrow, dark hut, locked the doors and windows, affixed a seal, set a guard, and kept the prisoner starving and thirsting. After that, Dioscorus went to the governor of that country, Martianus, and told him everything about his daughter, and reported that she rejected their gods and believed in the Crucified One.

Dioscorus asked the governor that, by threatening various tortures, he should bring her to her father's faith. Then he led the Saint out of confinement, brought her before the governor and delivered her into his hands, saying:

"I renounce her, because she rejects my gods; and if she does not turn to us again and bow down to them together with me, she shall not be a daughter to me, and I shall not be a father to her. Torture her, sovereign governor, as your will pleases."

Seeing the maiden before him, the governor was amazed at her extraordinary beauty, and began to speak to her gently and tenderly, praising her beauty and nobility. He exhorted her not to depart from the ancient ancestral laws and not to oppose her father's will, but to bow down to the gods and in everything obey her parent, lest she lose the right to inherit all his property. But St. Barbara, exposing by her wise speech the vanity of the pagan gods, confessed and glorified the Name of Jesus Christ and renounced all the vanity of earth, wealth and worldly pleasures, striving after the blessings of heaven. The governor still continued to persuade her not to dishonor her family and not to destroy the beautiful and flowering youth. At last he said to her:

"Pity yourself, beautiful maiden, and hasten with zeal to offer sacrifice to the gods together with us, for I am merciful to you and wish to spare you, not desiring to deliver such beauty to torments and wounds. But if you do not listen to me and submit, you will force me, even against my will, to torment you cruelly."

St. Barbara answered:

"I always offer to my God the sacrifice of praise, and I wish myself to be a sacrifice to Him, for He alone is the True God, the Creator of heaven and earth and all that is in them; but your gods are nothing and have created nothing, being lifeless and inactive; they themselves are the work of human hands, as the prophet of God says: 'Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens' (Ps. 113:12; Ps. 95:5). I acknowledge these prophetic words and believe in the One God, the Creator of all; and about your gods I confess that they are false, and that your hope in them is vain."

Enraged by such words of St. Barbara, the governor at once commanded that she be stripped. This first torment, to stand naked before the eyes of many men, who without shame looked persistently upon the bare virginal body, was for the chaste and pure maiden a suffering more grievous than the wounds themselves. Then the tormentor ordered her to be laid on the ground and beaten for a long time with ox-sinews, and the earth was stained with her blood. When, at the governor's command, the scourging was stopped, the torturers, to increase

her sufferings, began to rub the wounds of the holy maiden with a hair shirt and sharp potsherds. Yet all these torments, rushing more violently than storm and wind upon the temple of a young and weak girl's body, did not shake the martyr Barbara, firm in faith, for her faith was founded on the rock, Christ the Lord, for whose sake she endured such grievous sufferings with joy.

After that the governor commanded that she be shut up in prison until he should devise for her the most cruel torments. Barely alive from the grievous tortures, St. Barbara prayed with tears in the prison to her beloved Bridegroom, Christ God, that He would not forsake her in such grievous sufferings, and said with the words of David: "Forsake me not, O Lord my God; be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord, my Savior!" (Ps. 37:22–23). As she was praying thus, at midnight a great light shone upon her; fear and at the same time joy filled the Saint's heart: her Incorruptible Bridegroom was drawing near, desiring to visit His bride. And behold, the King of Glory Himself appeared to her in ineffable glory. Oh, how her spirit rejoiced, and what sweetness she felt in her heart when she saw Him! The Lord, looking upon her with love, said to her with His sweetest lips:

"Take courage, My bride, and fear not, for I am with you; I guard you, I look upon your struggle and lighten your afflictions. For your sufferings I prepare for you in My heavenly mansion an eternal reward. Endure, then, to the end, that you may soon enjoy the eternal blessings in My Kingdom!"

Listening to the words of the Lord Christ, St. Barbara, like wax before fire, melted with longing to be united with God, and, like a river in flood, was filled with love for Him. Having comforted His beloved bride Barbara and sweetened her with His love, Jesus, most sweet, healed her wounds, so that not a trace of them remained on her body. After that He became invisible, leaving her in ineffable spiritual joy. And St. Barbara remained in the prison as though in heaven, burning, like the Seraphim, with love for God, glorifying Him with heart and lips and giving thanks to the Lord that He had not despised, but had visited His servant suffering for His Name.

There lived in that city a certain woman named Juliana, a believer in Christ and God-fearing. From the time when St. Barbara was seized by her tormentors, Juliana had followed her from a distance and looked upon her sufferings; and when the saint was cast into prison, she pressed herself to the prison window, marvelling that a maiden so young, in the very flower of youth and beauty, had despised her father, all her kindred, the riches and all the goods and pleasures of the world, and had not spared her life, but had with zeal laid it down for Christ. Seeing that Christ had healed St. Barbara of her wounds, Juliana desired to suffer for Him herself, and began to prepare herself for such an ascetic feat, praying to Jesus Christ, the Leader of the contest, that He would send her patience in her sufferings. With the coming of day, St. Barbara was led out of the prison to the impious tribunal for a new torment; Juliana followed her from afar. When St. Barbara stood before the governor, he and those with him saw with astonishment that the maiden was completely whole, bright of countenance and even more beautiful than before, and that there were no traces on her body of the wounds she had borne. Seeing this, the governor said:

"Do you see, maiden, how our gods care for you? Yesterday you were cruelly torn and fainting from your sufferings, and now they have completely healed you and granted you health. Be therefore grateful for such a benefaction of theirs: worship them and offer sacrifices."

The saint answered:

"What are you saying, governor, that your gods have healed me? They are themselves blind, dumb and insensible. They cannot grant sight to the blind, nor speech to the dumb, nor hearing to the deaf, nor the ability to walk to the lame; they cannot heal the sick nor raise the dead. How then could they heal me, and why should one worship them? It was Jesus Christ, my God, who healed me, who cures every sickness and gives life to the dead. Him I worship with thanksgiving, and I offer myself to Him as a sacrifice. But your mind is blinded, and you cannot see this Divine Healer, and you are unworthy of Him."

Such a speech of the holy martyr threw the governor into a rage: he commanded that the martyr be hung on a tree, that her body be scraped with iron claws, that her ribs be scorched with burning

candles, and that her head be struck with a hammer. St. Barbara endured all these sufferings with courage. From such tortures it would have been impossible to remain alive not only for her, a young maiden, but even for a strong man; but the Lamb of Christ was strengthened invisibly by the power of God.

Among the crowd of people watching the torments of St. Barbara stood Juliana. Beholding the great suffering of St. Barbara, Juliana could not restrain her tears and wept bitterly. Filled with zeal, she raised her voice from the crowd and began to denounce the merciless governor for his inhuman cruelty and to revile the pagan gods. At once she was seized, and when asked what her faith was, she declared that she was a Christian. Then the governor commanded that she be tortured in the same way as Barbara. Juliana was hung up together with Barbara, and her flesh was scraped with iron combs. And the holy Great Martyr Barbara, seeing this and herself enduring the torments, raised her eyes on high, to God, and prayed:

"O God, who searchest the hearts of men, Thou knowest that I have offered myself entirely to Thee as a sacrifice and have given myself into the power of Thy almighty right hand, striving toward Thee and loving Thy holy commandments. Do not forsake me, O Lord, but, mercifully regarding me and my fellow-sufferer Juliana, strengthen us both and grant us strength to accomplish the present struggle: 'The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak' (Mt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38)."

Thus the saint prayed, and heavenly help was invisibly supplied to the martyrs for courageous endurance of their sufferings. After this the tormentor commanded that the breasts of both be cut off. When this had been done and the martyrs' suffering had increased, St. Barbara, again raising her eyes to her Physician and Healer, cried out: "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us; restore to us, O Lord, the joy of Thy salvation, and establish us in Thy love by Thy governing Spirit" (Ps. 50:13–14).

After such torments, the governor commanded that St. Juliana be led to the prison, and that St. Barbara, for her greater shame, be led naked through the city with mockery and blows. The holy maiden Bar-

bara, covering herself with shame as with a garment, cried out to her beloved Bridegroom Christ God:

"O God, who clothest the heaven with clouds and swaddlest the earth in mist as with swaddling clothes,[7] Thou Thyself, O King, cover the nakedness of my body and the suffering of the Great Martyr Barbara; grant that the eyes of the impious may not see my body, and that Thy servant may not be mocked to the end!"

The Lord Jesus Christ, who from on high, together with all His holy Angels, beheld the feat of His servant, at once hastened to her aid and sent to her a bright Angel with a radiant garment to cover the nakedness of the holy martyr. After that the impious could no longer see the bare body of the martyr, and she was led back to the tormentor. After her, the holy Juliana was led through the city, likewise naked. At last the tormentor, seeing that he could not turn them from their love of Christ and bend them to idolatry, condemned both to beheading by the sword.

Dioscorus, the hard-hearted father of Barbara, was so hardened by the devil that he not only did not grieve at the sight of his daughter's great torments, but was not even ashamed to become her executioner. Seizing his daughter and holding a drawn sword in his hand, Dioscorus dragged her to the place of execution, which had been appointed on a certain hill outside the city, while one of the soldiers led Juliana behind them. As they went, St. Barbara prayed to God thus:

"O Beginningless God, who hast stretched out the heavens as a covering and hast founded the earth upon the waters, who commandest Thy sun to shine upon the good and the evil and sendest rain upon the just and the unjust[8], hear now Thy servant who prays to Thee; hear, O King, and grant Thy grace to every man who shall remember me and my sufferings, that sudden sickness may not approach him and sudden death may not seize him, for Thou knowest, O Lord, that we are flesh and blood and the creation of Thy most pure hands."

As she was praying thus, a voice was heard from heaven calling her with Juliana to the heavenly dwellings and promising her the fulfilment

7. Expressions borrowed from Holy Scripture: cf. Ps. 146:9; Job 38:10.
8. Expressions of Holy Scripture: cf. Ps. 103:2, 135:6; Mt. 5:45.

of what she asked. And both martyrs, Barbara and Juliana, went to death with great joy, desiring to be quickly released from the body and to stand before the Lord. When they reached the appointed place, the Lamb of Christ, Barbara, bowed her head beneath the sword and was beheaded by the hands of her merciless father, and what is said in Scripture was fulfilled: "the father shall deliver up the child to death" (Mt. 10:21; Mk. 13:12). St. Juliana was beheaded by a soldier. Thus they accomplished their struggle[9]. Their holy souls joyfully departed to their Bridegroom Christ, met by Angels and lovingly received by the Lord Himself. Dioscorus and the governor Martianus were suddenly overtaken by the judgment of God. Immediately after the execution, both of them were struck dead by a thunderbolt, and lightning reduced their bodies to ashes.

In that city there lived a pious man named Galentian. Taking the honorable relics of the holy martyrs, he carried them into the city, buried them with fitting honor, and built a church over them, in which there were many healings from the relics of the holy martyrs, through the prayers and by the grace of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the One God in the Trinity. To Him be glory forever. Amen.

On the Honorable Relics of the Great Martyr Barbara

Afterwards the honorable relics of the holy Great Martyr Barbara were transferred from Greece to Russia, to Kiev, when, after the enlightenment of the Russian land by holy Baptism, the Russian princes stood in particularly close and friendly relations with the Greek emperors and took their sisters and daughters as wives[10]. During such close and friendly relations between the Greek and Russian rulers, Kiev received from Greece the priceless gift of the healing relics of the holy Great Martyr Barbara, as the narrative written in 1670 by the abbot of the Kiev Monastery of St. Michael of the Golden Domes[11], the hieromonk Theodosius Safonovich[12], a man worthy of trust, relates.

9. The blessed repose of the Holy Great Martyrs Barbara and Juliana took place in 306 A.D.

10. Thus St. Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles Prince, took as his wife the princess Anna, sister of the Greek emperors Basil and Constantine. His grandson, the son of Yaroslav, Grand Prince Vsevolod, who reigned in Kiev after his elder brother Iziaslav Yaroslavich, likewise had as his wife the daughter of the Greek emperor Constantine Monomachos, from whom was born his son Vladimir Monomakh, afterwards Grand Prince of Kiev.

The first wife of the Grand Prince of Kiev Sviatopolk Izyaslavich[13], who in holy Baptism was named Michael, was the Greek princess Barbara, daughter of the Byzantine Emperor Alexius Comnenus[14]. Before her departure from Constantinople for Russia, the princess Barbara besought her father to grant her the relics of the holy Great Martyr Barbara, which she brought with her to Kiev. Her husband, the Grand Prince Michael, having built in 1108 a stone church in Kiev in the name of the holy Archistrategus Michael, his protector, solemnly placed the holy relics of the Great Martyr in it[15]. During the invasion of the Russian land by the Tatar khan Batu[16], the holy relics of the Great Martyr were hidden by the church servers in a secret place beneath the steps of the stone staircase that led up into the church. Many years after Batu's devastation, the honorable relics, by the good pleasure of God, were uncovered, taken out from beneath their concealment, and openly placed with honor in the same church.

In 1644, in the time of the great zealot of Orthodoxy, the Kiev Metropolitan Peter Mogila[17], Kiev was visited by George Ossolinski, Chancellor of the Polish Kingdom. Coming to the church of the Michael Monastery to venerate the honorable relics of the Great Martyr Barbara, he related the following:

I have a deep faith in the help of St. Barbara the Great Martyr, for many bear witness that whoever commits himself to her intercession

11. The Men's Monastery of St. Michael of the Golden Domes, according to ancient tradition, was built in the first years after the introduction of Christianity into Russia by the first Metropolitan of Kiev and all Rus', Michael, who baptized the men of Kiev in the Dnieper at the very place where the chief idol, Perun, had stood. But according to the earliest chronicle accounts, it was founded in 1108 by the Grand Prince of Kiev Sviatopolk Iziaslavich.

12. Theodosius Safonovich – teacher and preacher of Kiev, from 1665 abbot of the Monastery of St. Michael of the Golden Domes.

13. Sviatopolk Iziaslavich – grandson of Yaroslav the Wise and great-grandson of St. Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles – reigned in the Grand Principality of Kiev from 1093 to 1114.

14. Alexis I Comnenus, Byzantine emperor, reigned from 1081 to 1118.

15. In the Monastery of St. Michael of the Golden Domes, where the relics of the Great Martyr Barbara rest even now, having been placed in 1847 in a rich reliquary of silver gilt.

16. The invasion of Batu took place in 1240.

17. Peter Mogila, the renowned champion of Orthodoxy, was Metropolitan of Kiev from 1631 to 1646; he is known for his struggle for Orthodoxy against the Catholics and the Uniates, for the establishment of the Kiev Brotherhood School, for the publication of liturgical and edifying books, for his sermons, and for other writings.

shall not die without repentance and without partaking of the Divine Mysteries. I was in Rome and in the western lands, and everywhere I inquired where the relics of St. Barbara the Great Martyr are to be found, in the West or in the East. I was told that no relics of the Holy Great Martyr are to be found in the West, nor are there any in the East, as those who had been there affirm, but that they rest in these lands. Now I believe that it is here in Kiev that the true relics of St. Barbara the Great Martyr are to be found.

Having bowed before the holy relics with fervent prayer, and having kissed them with reverence, the chancellor asked that he be given some part of these holy relics. For the sake of his great faith, he was given a part of a finger of the right hand of the Holy Great Martyr, which he received with great gratitude.

In 1650, during the time of the Metropolitan of Kiev Sylvester Kossov,[18] the Lithuanian hetman Prince Janusz Radziwiłł took the city of Kiev by storm. At his request, he was given two portions of the relics of St. Barbara the Great Martyr, taken from her breast and from a rib. The hetman gave the portion from the breast of the Great Martyr to his wife, Princess Maria, the pious daughter of the Moldo-Wallachian hospodar Basil. When Maria died, the portion of relics kept by her passed to the Metropolitan of Kiev Joseph Tukalsky,[19] who brought it to the town of Kaniv,[20] and after his death it was transferred to the town of Baturyn,[21] where it rests to this day in the monastery of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, reverently venerated and pouring forth miraculous healings. The other portion, from the rib of the Great Martyr, the same Prince Radziwiłł sent as a gift to the Catholic Bishop of Vilna, George Tyszkiewicz, fulfilling his desire and earnest requests. Having received this gift, the bishop kept it with honor in his chamber in a richly adorned reliquary. After some time, the bishop's house burned down, but the reliquary with the portion of the relics of St. Barbara the Great Martyr remained whole and unharmed. When this became known, all

18. Silvester Kossov – Metropolitan of Kiev – served as hierarch in Kiev from 1647 to 1657.
19. Joseph Neliubovich-Tukalsky – from 1663 Metropolitan of Kiev, a well-known champion of Orthodoxy; afterwards he was imprisoned by the Poles and died in Chyhyryn.
20. Kaniv – a district town of the Kiev province, on the river Dnieper.
21. Baturin – a town of the Chernigov province, in the Konotop district.

were greatly astonished, and they glorified God and St. Barbara the Great Martyr. News of this miracle was brought to the Monastery of St. Michael in 1657. A year earlier, in 1656, the Patriarch of Antioch Macarius[22] was in Kiev. With great faith and love, and with tears, he bowed before the honorable relics of the Holy Great Martyr and related the following:

"In my patriarchate, not far from Antioch, there is the city of Heliopolis, in which St. Barbara the Great Martyr suffered. When I inquired there about her holy relics, I was told that from ancient times they are found neither there nor in any other place in the East, but that they rest in the Russian land, which some call the land of the barbarians. Now I unhesitatingly believe that here rest the true relics of the Holy Great Martyr."

The Patriarch earnestly asked that he be given a portion of these holy relics. His request was granted by the Metropolitan of Kiev Sylvester, and the Patriarch received a portion of the holy relics with great joy and thanksgiving.

Many wonders and healings from the holy relics of the Great Martyr have taken place and still take place in the Monastery of St. Michael of the Golden Domes. These wonders proclaim to the whole world more loudly than trumpets, and assure all of the truth of the relics and of the grace-filled power acting through them. Concerning some of these wonders, we shall here present brief accounts.

Archbishop Lazarus Baranovich of Chernigov,[23] even before he occupied the episcopal see, from 1640 labored in preaching the word of God. Preaching, among other occasions, on the feast of St. Barbara the Great Martyr before her honorable relics, he with deep gratitude and emotion proclaimed the wonder of his healing from a grievous illness, received from those holy relics. And, ceaselessly glorifying this wonder, he related it in his book *Festal Labors*, printed in 1674, as follows: "Afflicted with a grievous illness, I did not turn to any other physician,

22. Macarius, Patriarch of Antioch from 1648 to 1672.

23. Lazarus Baranovich – Archbishop of Chernigov from 1647 to 1693, a figure of the Russian Church, known for his polemic with the Jesuits and other writings, as well as for his preaching activity.

but had recourse with prayer to the relics of St. Barbara the Great Martyr; with faith I drank water in which the hand of the Great Martyr had been dipped, and a cup of this water was for my salvation."

The abbot of the Holy Monastery of St. Michael of the Golden Domes at Kiev, Hieromonk Theodosius, relates that when, by the blessing of the Metropolitan of Kiev Sylvester Kossov, he assumed the leadership of the monastery in 1655, there came to him in that year a certain citizen of Sluck, who brought him a hand made of silver and asked that it be hung beside the relics of St. Barbara the Great Martyr. When the visitor was asked why he had done this, he frankly related the following:

"My hand had been struck by a grievous illness, and it was so contracted that I could not even straighten it. Suffering from this incurable illness, I remembered the wonders that flow from the honorable relics of St. Barbara the Great Martyr. I prayed to the Holy Great Martyr for the healing of my hand and vowed to go and venerate her holy relics. And now, by the help of St. Barbara, my contracted hand has been healed, and I, fulfilling my vow, have come here with thanksgiving and have brought this silver hand, in token of the healing of my hand, to the holy relics of the Great Martyr."

The same Theodosius relates that in 1660, during the civil war then raging, he grieved deeply over the poverty of his monastery and over the dangers to health and life. Once, during sleep, he saw that he was standing before the relics of St. Barbara the Great Martyr and saw that her reliquary was full of oil. The Holy Great Martyr said to him:

"Do not be troubled; I am with you."

Awaking, he began to reflect on the vision he had had, and, recalling that in Holy Scripture oil signifies mercy,[24] he said to himself:

"The reliquary filled with oil, in which I saw the Great Martyr lying, is a sign that by her holy prayers there will be no more poverty and calamity in the monastery."

So it indeed came to pass.

In 1666, during the Nativity fast, in which the memory of the Holy Great Martyr is also celebrated, two soldiers, named Andrew and

Theodore, plotted to steal a precious ornament that was upon the relics of the Great Martyr. Coming to the monastery at night, they broke open the southern doors of St. Michael's church and rushed toward the relics of St. Barbara. When they approached her honorable reliquary, suddenly a terrible thunderclap sounded, and fiery sparks came down upon them from the saint's reliquary. In fear the thieves fell to the ground as though dead, and one of them was at once struck deaf, and the other went out of his mind. Coming somewhat to himself, the deaf one, having experienced on himself the punishment of God and of the Holy Great Martyr, led his demented companion out of the church, closed the church doors again, and, taking nothing, returned home. This wonder, seven days later, the deaf man himself confessed with a contrite heart before his spiritual father, Hieromonk Simeon, coming to St. Michael's church together with his companion. The confessor instructed them, as far as he could, to bring true repentance, and dismissed them with hope of help and healing from the Holy Great Martyr. After that, Simeon, approaching to celebrate the Divine Liturgy before the holy sanctuary, related what had happened to his superior, Abbot Theodosius.

In 1669, on 12 August, a soldier, coming to the church to the honorable relics of St. Barbara the Great Martyr, bowed before them with great reverence and, sighing, related the following to the sexton and to many others:

"I have been granted the great and wondrous intercession of the Holy Great Martyr. Once, when I was in the regiment, I went with other comrades to the hay harvest, and the Tatars attacked us and took all my comrades captive; only I escaped. As I was giving thanks to God for my deliverance and grieving for my comrades, there appeared to me the holy maiden Barbara, in the same garment and crown as she lies here, and said to me: 'Know that I am the Martyr Barbara, who delivered you from the Tatars.' And so I have come here to her holy relics to give thanks for her wondrous intercession, and to tell you of this wonder."

In the following year, 1670, a citizen of Kiev named John, who had been at first a simple man and afterward a burgomaster, fell ill with a

fever. Suffering long from this ailment, he remembered St. Barbara the Great Martyr, who grants wondrous healings from her honorable relics. Lacking the strength, because of his sickness, to rise from his bed and go to the church, he sent with faith in his healing to the Monastery of St. Michael, asking that he be given water poured upon the reliquary of St. Barbara. At the same time he himself lay in such a terrible fever that his tongue was parched. His household advised him to drink something to cool the fever. But he answered:

"Even if I must die, I will drink nothing until water from the reliquary of the Holy Great Martyr is brought to me."

So great was his faith in the Holy Great Martyr. When water from her holy relics was brought, John received it with joy and, having prayed with faith, drank it. Immediately he fell into a deep sleep, whereas before he had been unable to sleep at all. And in his sleep he saw himself in the church of the holy Archangel Michael, and a beautiful maiden said to him:

"Do you know who I am?"

When he answered that he did not know, the maiden said again:

"Know, then, that I am the Martyr Barbara. There are many people who do not believe that my incorruptible relics rest in the Monastery of St. Michael. Be convinced now yourself of the truth of my relics, and proclaim to all that they should believe this; and as a sign of it, from now on be in good health."

Having said this, she lay down herself in her reliquary, which stood in the place of honor, and John, immediately awakening, felt himself entirely healthy, as though he had never been ill at all. Giving thanks to God and to St. Barbara, he related to his elder brother, Theodosius, Abbot of the Monastery of St. Michael, and to all others, the wonder of his healing through the help of the holy Great Martyr, and her testimony as to the genuineness of her relics.

It should also be mentioned here that the left hand of the holy Great Martyr, which from ancient times had not been with her incorrupt body, was left behind in Greece. After many years, under Peter Mogila,

24. Eleos – from the Greek, means "mercy, compassion."

Metropolitan of Kiev, it was brought into Poland by Mozel, a Greek who had settled there. He was of the imperial house of the Cantacuzenes and was a skilled teacher of the medical art. The hand he brought was placed in the stone brotherhood church he had built in honor of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, in the Volhynian city of Lutsk. Many years later, under the Orthodox Bishop of Lutsk, Gideon (of the family of the Princes Chetvertinsky), who afterwards became Metropolitan of Kiev,[25] Jews robbed the church at Lutsk, and that holy hand, lying in a silver reliquary, was stolen along with other church vessels and cast into a heated distillery furnace, where, exposed to the fire all day and all night, it remained unharmed. Seeing this, the godless thieves took the miraculously undamaged holy hand out of the heated furnace and secretly, at night, tried to crush it with iron hammers; after laboring hard, they broke it into small pieces and threw them back into the same burning furnace.

By the wondrous providence of God, this crime of the godless Jews was soon discovered through a careful investigation of the theft and the testimony of neighbors, who had heard the sound of hammers at night. Subjected to torture, the thieves would not confess to their crime. Then the investigators had the pious thought to rake the ashes out of the furnace and sift them through a sieve. Small fragments of the crushed hand of the Great Martyr were immediately found, together with the coral ornament that had been on that hand; it had not turned to ash but had only become white from the fire. After this, the godless Jews themselves, again subjected to torture, confessed their crime. With the permission of Bishop Gideon, the holy hand of the Great Martyr, crushed by the malefactors, was placed, together with all the fragments found and the corals, in a splendid reliquary made especially for this purpose. This small reliquary, with a cross procession and candles, accompanied by the whole sanctified cathedral clergy and a multitude of people, was solemnly carried into the cathedral church of St. John the Theologian at Lutsk. Several years later, Bishop Gideon, removing from Lutsk to Little Russia because of persecution of Orthodoxy, brought with him

25. Lutsk – a district town of the Volhynia province. Gideon served as hierarch in Kiev from 1685 to 1690.

that reliquary with the fragmented holy hand of the Great Martyr Barbara. When he was enthroned as Metropolitan of Kiev, he placed the holy hand, in the same reliquary and with due honor, in the sanctuary of the cathedral church of the Kiev Metropolis, in honor of St. Sophia, the Wisdom of God, where it is still reverently venerated to this day.[8040]

Troparion, Tone 8:

Let us honor holy Barbara, for she shattered the snares of the enemy, and like a bird was delivered from them, by the help and weapon of the Cross, most honorable one.

Kontakion, Tone 4:

Thou who didst follow God, O Passion-bearer, and didst piously sing the praise of the Trinity, thou didst blunt the idol-worshipping shrines; and in the midst of thy ascetic struggle, O Barbara, thou didst not fear the threats of the tormentors, O wise one, singing loudly and ever: We honor the Trinity, one Godhead.

* * *

Life of Our Venerable Father John of Damascus

Житие преподобного отца нашего Иоанна Дамаскина

The Venerable John of Damascus was born in Damascus, the capital of Syria,[26] of noble and pious parents,[27] whose fervent faith in Christ, tested in sorrows and temptations, proved stronger and more precious than gold, which perishes even though tested by fire. It was a grievous time. The Saracens had conquered that land, and having taken this famous city, they inflicted every kind of harm upon the Christians, killing some, selling others into slavery, and allowing no one to confess Christ openly. At that time the parents of John, shielded by

26. Damascus is the principal and wealthiest commercial city of Syria, one of the most ancient in the whole world; it lies to the northeast of Palestine, on the river Barada, which flows through it, in a beautiful and fertile plain at the eastern foot of Anti-Lebanon. At the present time Damascus, which forms part of the Turkish Empire, is one of the richest cities of Asia, with a population of over 150,000 inhabitants.

27. St. John of Damascus was born about 680. His family name was Mansur.

the providence of God, were preserved in safety and health with all their property; they also kept the holy faith, for God granted them the ability to win the favor of the Saracens, as once He did for Joseph among the Egyptians[28] and for Daniel among the Babylonians,[29] so that the wicked Agarenes[30] did not forbid the parents of the saint to believe in Christ and to openly glorify His holy Name. Moreover, they made the father of St. John city judge and overseer of public works.[31] Living in such prosperity, he did much good for his fellow believers: he ransomed captives, freed those held in prison from their chains, delivered them from death, and offered a helping hand to all who suffered. The parents of the Venerable were in Damascus among the Agarenes like lamps in the night, like seed in Israel, like a spark in ashes. For this reason they were preserved by God, so that through them there might be kindled in the Church of Christ a lamp shining clearly to the whole world: the blessed John of Damascus. Having begotten him according to the flesh, they hastened to make him a child of light also through baptism, which at that time was a very difficult undertaking. The Agarenes allowed no one to receive baptism, yet the parents of the saint baptized their child without hindrance and gave him a name signifying the grace of God.[32] The father of the boy took great care that he be brought up in good teaching and learn not the customs of the Saracens, nor military bravery, nor the hunting of beasts, nor any other worldly skill, but meekness, humility, the fear of God, and knowledge of the Divine Scriptures. Therefore he diligently besought God to send his son a wise and pious man who would be a good teacher and guide for the youth in good works. The father of the saint was heard by God and received what he desired in this manner.

28. Gen. 41:37.
29. Dan. 2:48.
30. The Agarenes, or otherwise Saracens, were Arabian Bedouins. The name Agarenes, which originally designated this nomadic tribe, was later extended by Christian writers to all Arabs, and then came to mean Muslims in general. The Arabian Bedouins were called Agarenes because, according to Jewish tradition, they were descendants of Ishmael, son of Hagar, the handmaid of Abraham.
31. The father of St. John of Damascus, Sergius Mansur, served under the Damascene caliph Abd al-Malik (686–705) as chief logothete, that is, administrator of the treasury, treasurer.
32. "John," translated from the Hebrew, means "God's grace."

The Damascene brigands made frequent raids both by land and by sea upon neighboring lands, seized Christians captive, and bringing them to their city, some they sold in the markets, others they put to death. Once it happened that they took captive a certain monk named Cosmas, of pleasing appearance and beautiful soul, who came from Italy. Together with the other captives, they resolved to sell him in the market. Those whom the brigands were about to cut down with the sword, falling at the feet of this monk, with tears begged him to pray to God for their souls. Seeing the reverence which those condemned to death showed the monk, the Saracens asked him what rank and honor he had enjoyed among the Christians in his homeland. He answered:

"I held no rank whatever; I was not even deemed worthy of the priesthood. I am only a sinful monk, instructed in philosophy, not only Christian but also that which was devised by the pagan sages!"

Having said this, the monk wept bitterly. Nearby stood the father of John; seeing the weeping old man and recognizing from his garb that he was a monk, he approached him and, wishing to comfort him in his sorrow, said:

"It is in vain, man of God, that you weep over the loss of the world, which you have long renounced and to which you have died, as I see from your appearance and dress."

"I weep," answered the monk, "not over the loss of the world, for to it I have died, as you say, and I am concerned with nothing worldly, knowing that there is another life, better, immortal and eternal, prepared for the servants of Christ, which I too hope to obtain by the help of God. I weep rather because I am leaving this world childless, having left no heir behind me."

The father of John was astonished at the monk's words and said:

"Father, you are a monk, who has dedicated himself to God for the preservation of purity, not for the begetting of children. Why do you grieve over children?"

The monk answered:

"You do not understand what I have said, sir. I do not speak of a fleshly son or of earthly inheritance, but of a spiritual one. I am, as you yourself see, a poor monk and have nothing, but I have a great wealth

of wisdom, with which I have enriched myself, laboring from my youth with the help of God. I have studied various human sciences: rhetoric, dialectic, the philosophy taught by the Stagirite and by the son of Ariston;[33] I know geometry and music, I have studied well the motion of the heavenly bodies and the courses of the stars, so that from the beauty of creation and its wise ordering I can come to a clearer knowledge of the Creator Himself. Finally, I have studied well also the teaching on the mysteries of Orthodoxy composed by the Greek and Roman theologians. Having such knowledge myself, I have imparted it to no one, and what I have learned I cannot now teach anyone, for I have neither time nor a disciple, and I think I shall die here by the sword of the Agarenes and appear before my Lord like a tree that has borne no fruit, like a servant who hid his master's talent in the earth.[34] This is what I weep and sob over. As fathers according to the flesh grieve that, though married, they have no children, so I grieve and lament that I have not a single spiritual son who would be, after me, the heir of my wealth of wisdom."

Hearing such words, the father of St. John rejoiced that he had found the treasure he had long desired, and said to the old man:

"Do not grieve, Father: God can fulfill the desire of your heart."

Having said this, he hastened to the Saracen prince, and falling at his feet, earnestly besought him to give him the captive monk; and he did not meet with a refusal. The prince granted him this gift, which was indeed more precious than many other gifts. With joy the father of John brought Blessed Cosmas into his house, and comforted him after his long suffering, providing him with ease and rest.

"Father," he said, "be the master of my house and a partaker in all my joys and sorrows."

33. Stagira was a city on the Chalcidice peninsula, where the Greek philosopher Aristotle (4th century B.C.) was born, and he was therefore called the Stagirite. The Greek philosopher Plato (4th century B.C.) is here called the son of Ariston. Philosophy is the science which investigates the highest questions of being: concerning God, the beginning, essence and laws of the world and of man, the purpose of man and the final aims of the existence of the world, and so forth. Rhetoric and dialectic are sciences which investigate the laws of thought and the means of their expression.

34. An Evangelical expression from the parable of the talents. Mt. 25:16.

And he added:

"Behold, God has not only granted you freedom, but has also fulfilled your desire. I have two children: one, my son according to the flesh, is John; the other is a youth whom I have taken in place of a son, a native of Jerusalem, an orphan from childhood. He shares your name, for he too is called Cosmas. I beg you, father, teach them wisdom and good morals, and guide them in every good work. Make them your spiritual sons, regenerate and nurture them by your teaching, and leave them after you as heirs of that spiritual wealth which no one can steal."

Blessed Elder Cosmas rejoiced, glorified God, and began to instruct and teach both youths with zeal. The youths were intelligent; they absorbed everything their teacher taught and made successful progress in their studies. John, like an eagle soaring through the air, grasped the lofty mysteries of learning, and his spiritual brother Cosmas, like a ship swiftly borne by a favorable wind, quickly attained the depths of wisdom. Studying diligently and earnestly, they acquired wisdom in a short time: they mastered grammar, philosophy and arithmetic, and became like Pythagoras and Diophantus[35]; they also studied land-measurement, so that they might be counted new Euclids[36]. That they advanced in poetry is witnessed by the church hymns and verses they composed. Nor did they neglect astronomy, and they also studied the theological mysteries well. Moreover, they learned good morals and a virtuous life, and became perfectly accomplished in knowledge, both spiritual and worldly wisdom. John especially made progress. His teacher himself marveled at him, for in some fields of wisdom John surpassed him. John became a great theologian, as his God-inspired and God-wise books bear witness. Yet he was not proud of such wisdom. As a fruitful tree, the more fruit it bears, the lower it bends its branches toward the earth, so John, the more he advanced in wisdom, the less he thought of himself; he learned to restrain in himself the vain dreams of youth and the passionate thoughts, and to kindle his soul, like a lamp filled with oil, with the fire of divine desire.

35. Pythagoras was the famous Greek philosopher of the 6th century B.C.; Diophantus was an Alexandrian mathematician of the 4th century A.D.
36. Euclid was a mathematician of the 3rd century B.C.

One day the teacher Cosmas said to John's father: "Your desire, sir, has been fulfilled: your youths have learned well, so that they now surpass me in wisdom. It is not enough for such disciples to be equal to their teacher. By their great memory and unceasing labors they have attained in perfection the whole depth of wisdom, and God has multiplied their gifts. I no longer need to teach them; they are able to teach others themselves. Therefore I beg you, sir, release me to a monastery, where I myself may become a disciple and learn the highest wisdom from perfected monks. The worldly philosophy I have learned sends me on to spiritual philosophy, which is more worthy and purer than worldly wisdom, for it is useful and saves the soul."

Hearing this, John's father was saddened, not wishing to lose so worthy and wise a teacher. Yet he did not dare to hold the elder back, lest he grieve him; he fulfilled his desire, and, generously rewarding him, released him in peace. The monk withdrew to the Lavra of the Venerable Sabbas, and having lived there well until his death, he passed over to the most perfect Wisdom, God. A few years later John's father also died. The Saracen prince, summoning John, offered him the post of first counselor to himself; John refused, having another desire: to labor for God in silence. Yet he was compelled to obey, and against his wish he accepted the office, and in the city of Damascus he received greater power than his father had held[8052].

At that time Leo the Isaurian[37] reigned in Greece, who, like a roaring lion, savagely rose against the Church of God. Casting icons out of the holy churches, he committed them to the flames, and mercilessly tormented with cruel tortures the Orthodox believers who venerated the holy icons. Hearing of this, John was kindled with zeal for piety, imitating Elijah the Tishbite and the Forerunner of Christ who bore his own name. Taking the sword of the Word of God, he began to cut off, as it were the head, the heretical delusion of the impious emperor; he sent out many epistles concerning the veneration of the holy icons to those orthodox believers who were known to him. In these epistles, on the basis of Holy Scripture and the ancient tradition of the God-bearing

37. Leo the Isaurian reigned in the Byzantine Empire from 716 to 741.

Fathers, he wisely showed how the due veneration of the holy icons must be rendered. He asked those to whom he wrote to show his epistle to other brethren of the same faith, so as to confirm them in Orthodoxy. Thus the saint strove to fill the whole world with his God-inspired epistles[38]. Spreading throughout the Greek empire, they confirmed the Orthodox in piety, and struck the heretics as with goads[39]. The report of this reached the emperor Leo himself, who, unable to endure the exposure of his impiety, summoned the heretics who shared his opinions and ordered them, assuming a false appearance of piety, to find among the Orthodox some epistle of John written in his own hand, and to ask to read it as though for their own profit. After many efforts, the accomplices of this wicked design found somewhere among the faithful one epistle written by John's own hand, and, obtaining it by flattery, they gave it into the emperor's hands. The emperor then commanded skillful scribes that, looking at John's letter, they should write, in the same letters, in the name of the holy man, an epistle to himself, the emperor Leo, as though written by John's own hand and sent from Damascus. That epistle was as follows:

"Rejoice, O emperor, and I rejoice in your power in the name of our common faith, and I offer veneration and the honor due to your imperial majesty. I inform you that our city of Damascus, which is in the hands of the Saracens, is poorly guarded and has no strong garrison at all; the army in it is weak and small. I beg you, be merciful to this city, for God's sake, send your valiant army. Showing that it intends to march to another place, it may suddenly fall upon Damascus, and then you will take the city into your possession without difficulty. In this I too shall help greatly, for the city and the whole country are in my hands."

38. St. John of Damascus wrote a work in defense of the holy icons and sent it to Constantinople, where, among other things, he wrote: "Recognizing my unworthiness, without doubt I ought to keep silent and only lament my sins before God; but seeing that the Church of God is agitated by a fierce storm, I think that now is not the time to be silent; I fear God more than an earthly sovereign, though the power of the sovereign is so great that it can easily sway the people." But John said nothing offensive in this work toward the Emperor Leo. At the request of his friends, John wrote yet two more epistles, one after another, in defense of the holy icons. The epistles of John were read eagerly in Constantinople and in other places; the weak were sustained in Orthodoxy by them, and the strong were strengthened in their strength.

39. *Osten, ostna, osn* – a pointed staff used to urge donkeys and oxen to go faster.

Having thus written in John's name such an epistle, the crafty emperor ordered a letter written in his own name to the Saracen prince, as follows:

"There is nothing better, I think, than to have peace and to be in friendship, for to keep peaceful promises is very praiseworthy and pleasing to God; therefore I desire to keep the peace concluded with you honest and faithful to the end. However, a certain Christian living in your realm, by his frequent letters to me, urges me to break the peace, and promises to put the city of Damascus into my hands without difficulty if I suddenly send my army. I send you one of those letters which this Christian wrote; it will convince you of my friendship, and in the man who dares to write to me thus, you will see treachery and enmity, and will know how to punish him."

The impious emperor Leo sent these two letters by one of his attendants to Damascus, to the prince of the Saracens. Having received and read them, the prince summoned John and showed him the false letter that had been written to the emperor Leo. John, reading and examining the epistle, said:

"The letters on this paper somewhat resemble the writing of my hand, yet it was not my hand that wrote this, for it has never entered my mind to write to the Greek emperor; it cannot be that I would serve my lord deceitfully."

John understood that this was the work of the hostile, wicked, heretical cunning. But the prince, falling into a rage, ordered that the right hand of the innocent John be cut off. John earnestly besought the prince to wait and grant him some time to prove his innocence, and the hatred which the wicked heretic emperor Leo bore toward him; but he did not obtain what he asked. The greatly angered prince ordered the punishment carried out at once. And they cut off John's right hand, the hand that strengthened the orthodox in God; that hand, which by its writings had exposed those who hated the Lord, was, instead of the ink with which it had written about the veneration of icons, moistened with its own blood. After the execution, John's hand was hung up in the marketplace in the midst of the city, while John himself, exhausted by

pain and loss of blood, was led home. Toward evening, learning that the prince's anger had passed, the blessed man sent him this petition:

"My illness increases, and it torments me beyond words; I cannot have any relief as long as my severed hand hangs in the air. I beseech you, my lord, command that my hand be given back to me, that I may bury it in the earth, for I believe that if it is buried I shall receive relief in my sickness."

The tormentor heeded this request and commanded that the hand be taken down from the public place and given to John. Taking his severed hand, John entered his prayer room, and falling to the ground before the holy icon of the Most Pure Mother of God, depicted with the Infant Christ in her arms, he applied the severed hand to the stump and began to pray with tears and sighs rising from the depths of his heart:

"O Most Pure Lady, Mother who gave birth to my God, behold, my right hand has been cut off for the sake of the divine icons. You know what brought Leo to anger; hasten to my aid and heal my hand. The Right Hand of the Most High, incarnate of You, works many miracles through Your prayers; therefore I beseech You that He also heal my right hand through Your intercession. O Mother of God! Let this hand of mine write what You Yourself will permit, to the praise of You and Your Son, and let it help the Orthodox faith by its writings. You can do all things, if You will, for You are the Mother of God."

Saying this with tears, John fell asleep and saw in a dream the Most Pure Mother of God looking upon him from the icon with bright and compassionate eyes and saying:

"Your hand is now healed; do not grieve over the rest, but labor diligently with it, as you promised me. Make it the reed of a swift writer."

When he awoke, John felt his hand and saw that it was healed. His spirit rejoiced in God his Savior and His Most Immaculate Mother, that the Almighty had wrought such a miracle upon him. Rising and lifting his hands to heaven, he offered thanksgiving to God and the Mother of God. And he rejoiced all night with his household, singing a new song:

"Thy right hand, O Lord, hath been glorified in strength" (Ex. 15:6); Thy right hand healed my severed right hand, and shall crush the enemies who honor not the honorable image of Thee and Thy Most

Pure Mother, and by it shall destroy, to the magnifying of Thy glory, the enemies who destroy the icons.

While John thus rejoiced with his household and sang songs of thanksgiving, his neighbors heard him, and learning the cause of his joy and gladness, they were greatly astonished. Soon the Saracen prince learned of it also, and immediately summoned John and ordered him to show the severed hand. At the joint from which the hand had been cut off there remained, like a red thread, a mark formed by the will of the Mother of God, as clear proof that the hand had been severed. Seeing this, the prince asked:

"What physician, and by what medicine, joined the hand so well to the joint and healed and quickened it so swiftly, as though it had never been severed and dead?"

John did not conceal the miracle, but spoke of it aloud before all:

"My Lord, the Almighty Physician, having heard my fervent prayer through His Most Pure Mother, healed my wound by His almighty power and made whole the hand which you ordered to be cut off."

Then the prince cried out:

"Woe is me! Not having examined the slander, I unjustly condemned you and put you, a good man, to death while innocent. I beg you, forgive us for having condemned you so hastily and foolishly; accept from us your former rank and former honor, and be our chief counselor. From this time forth, nothing shall be done in our realm without you and your counsel."

But John fell at the prince's feet and begged him long to release him and not hinder him from following his Lord with those monks who had denied themselves and taken upon themselves the yoke of the Lord. The prince, however, was unwilling to let him go, and strove to persuade John to remain as the head of his household and administrator of his entire realm. And there was a long dispute between them: each begged the other, and each strove to prevail by entreaty. With difficulty John achieved his desire: though not quickly, he nevertheless prevailed upon the prince, and was given the freedom to do as he wished.

Returning to his home, John at once distributed his countless possessions to the needy and set his slaves free; then he and his fellow stu-

dent Cosmas departed for Jerusalem. Having venerated the holy places there, he came to the Lavra of St. Sabbas and began to beseech the abbot to receive him as a straying sheep and number him among his chosen flock. The abbot and all the brotherhood recognized St. John, for he was already renowned, and all knew him on account of his authority, honors, and great wisdom. The abbot rejoiced that such a man had come to humility and poverty and desired to become a monk. Receiving him with love, the abbot summoned one of the brethren, the most experienced and most practiced in ascetic labors, intending to place John under his guidance, so that he might teach him both spiritual wisdom and the ascetic struggles of monastic life.[40] But that monk refused, unwilling to be the teacher of a man whose learning surpassed that of many. The abbot called another monk, but he too was unwilling, as were the third and the fourth; all the others likewise refused, each acknowledging that he was unworthy to be the guide of so wise a man, and they were also all abashed by John's noble birth. Last of all, a simple-hearted but wise elder was summoned; he did not refuse to be John's guide. Taking John into his cell, and wishing to lay in him the foundations of a virtuous life, the elder first gave him these rules: that he should do nothing by his own will; that he should offer his labors and fervent prayers to God as a kind of sacrifice; and that, if he wished to cleanse the sins of his former life, he should pour tears from his eyes, for this is more precious before God than any costly incense. These rules were the foundation for those deeds performed through bodily labors. For what pertained to the soul, the elder laid down these rules: that John should have nothing worldly in his mind; that he should not only refrain from imagining any unseemly images, but keep his mind inviolate and pure from every vain attachment and empty pride; that he should not boast of his wisdom and what he had learned, nor think that he could comprehend all things perfectly to the end; that he should seek neither revelations nor knowledge of hidden mysteries; that he should not trust, to the end of his life, that his understanding was unshakable

40. According to the rule of St. Sabbas the Sanctified, each newly arrived novice was entrusted, for testing, supervision and instruction, to an elder experienced in the spiritual life. So they did also with John, although his pious life and wide learning were known throughout the East.

and could not sin or fall into error; but, on the contrary, should know that his thoughts were weak and his understanding could err, and therefore strive not to let his thoughts wander, but endeavor to gather them together, so that in this way his mind might be enlightened by God, his soul sanctified, and his body cleansed of all defilement; and that his body and soul might be united with his mind and become three in the image of the Holy Trinity, so that man might be neither carnal nor merely of the soul, but spiritual in all things, transformed by good will from the two parts of man—the body and the soul—into the third and most important, that is, the mind. Such rules did the spiritual father prescribe to his spiritual son and the teacher to his disciple, adding also these words:

"Not only must you write no letters to anyone, but you must not even speak of anything belonging to secular learning. Keep silence with discernment, for you know that not only do our philosophers teach silence, but Pythagoras also enjoined prolonged silence upon his disciples; and do not think it is good to speak well at an inopportune time. Hear David, who said, 'I was silent even from good' (Ps. 38:3). And what benefit did he receive from this? Hear: 'My heart grew hot within me' (Ps. 38:4), that is, with the fire of divine love, which was kindled in the prophet as he meditated upon God."

All these teachings of the elder entered John's heart like seed in good soil, and, sprouting, took root; for John, living for a long time with that God-inspired elder, diligently fulfilled all his instructions and obeyed his commands, submitting to him sincerely, without contradiction or any murmuring; he never even resisted the elder's injunctions in his thoughts. This he inscribed in his heart as upon tablets:[41] "Every command of a father, according to the apostolic teaching, must be fulfilled without anger or doubting" (cf. 1 Tim. 2:8). And what benefit is there for one who is under obedience to have deeds in his hands and murmuring on his lips; to fulfill a command, yet contradict it with his tongue or in his mind? And when will such a man be perfect? Never.

41. *Tablets* – stone slabs which in antiquity served for writing; on the tablets at Sinai were inscribed the Ten Commandments of the law of God. In a figurative sense, "tablets" signify the human heart.

Such people labor in vain and think that they are living virtuously; joining obedience with murmuring, they bear a serpent hidden within them.

Blessed John, however, as a true novice, was without complaint in every task enjoined upon him.

One day the elder, wishing to test John's obedience and humility, gathered many baskets, the weaving of which was their occupation, and said to John:

"I have heard, child, that baskets sell for more in Damascus than in Palestine, while here in our cells we lack many of the most necessary things, as you yourself can see. So take these baskets, go quickly to Damascus, and sell them there. But take care not to sell them for less than the appointed price."

And the elder set a price for the baskets far higher than they were worth. The true novice contradicted him neither in word nor in thought; he did not say that the baskets were not worth the appointed price, nor that the journey was very long; he did not even think that it would be shameful to go to that city where everyone knew him and where he had formerly been famous for his authority. He neither said nor thought anything of the kind, showing himself an imitator of the Master Christ, obedient unto death.

Saying, "Bless me, Father," and receiving a blessing from his spiritual father, John at once took the baskets upon his shoulders and hastened to Damascus. Clad in torn garments, John went about the city, selling his baskets in the marketplace. Those wishing to buy them asked how much they cost; and when they learned their high price, they scolded and laughed at him, insulting and reproaching John. Those who knew the blessed man did not recognize him, for he who had once worn robes woven with gold was now dressed in the rags of the poor; his face had changed from fasting, his cheeks had grown gaunt, and his beauty had faded. But one citizen who had once served John, looking closely at his face, recognized the saint and was astonished at his beggarly appearance. Taking pity on him and sighing from his heart, he approached John as though he were a stranger and paid the price the saint had set for all the baskets—not because he had need of them, but out of compassion for a man who, from great honor and

wealth, had come, for God's sake, to such humility and poverty. Taking payment for the baskets, John returned to the one who had sent him, like a victor returning from war, who by obedience and humility had cast down to the earth the enemy, the devil, and with him pride and vain glory.

After some time, a monk of that Lavra died. His brother, left alone after the death, wept for him inconsolably. John comforted him much and for a long time, but could not comfort the brother, who was overwhelmed with boundless grief and sorrow. With tears, he began to beg John to write for him, to comfort him and ease his grief, some moving funeral hymn. John refused, fearing to break the elder's command, for the elder had ordered him to do nothing without his permission. But the grieving brother did not cease beseeching John, saying:

"Why will you not have mercy on my sorrowful soul and give me at least a little medicine for my great heartache? If you were a physician of the body, and I were stricken with some bodily illness and asked you to treat me, would you, though able to heal me, surely reject me, and let me die of that illness? Would you not have to answer to God for me, because you could help me and refused? But now I suffer even more from an illness of the heart, and seek from you the least help, yet you disregard me. And if I die of grief, will you not have to give a great account to God for me? If you fear the elder's command, I will hide what you have written so carefully that your elder will neither know nor hear of it."

At last John yielded to such words and wrote the following funeral troparia:

"What earthly sweetness," "All human things are vanity," "Why do we strive in vain, O men," and the others, which are sung in church to this day at the burial of the dead.[42]

42. Such are, for example, "Where there is worldly attachment," "We remember the prophets crying out: I am earth and ashes," "I weep and lament," and others, the so-called *samoglasny*. All of them are distinguished by extraordinary poignancy; in them, naturally and with force, at the grave of the sons of Adam, is depicted the lot of the son of dust and the vanity and corruptibility of everything earthly, and tender prayers for the repose of the departed are raised to God. All of them have entered into the services for the burial of the dead and are used in the Orthodox Church to the present day.

One day, while the elder had gone somewhere from the cell, John sat within it and sang the troparia he had composed. After a while the elder returned and, as he approached the cell, heard John singing. He hurried in at once and angrily said to him:

"How have you so quickly forgotten your promises, and, instead of weeping, are rejoicing and making merry, singing some songs to yourself?"

John told him the reason for his singing and explained that his brother's tears had compelled him to write the songs; then, falling prostrate on the ground, he begged the elder's forgiveness. But the elder, unyielding as a hard stone, at once sent the blessed John away from living with him and drove him from the cell. Driven out, John remembered Adam's expulsion from Paradise, which had come about through disobedience, and wept bitterly before the elder's cell, as Adam had once wept before Paradise. After this he went to other fathers, whom he regarded as perfect in virtue, and begged them to go to the elder and entreat him to forgive his transgression. They went and pleaded with the elder to forgive his disciple and receive him into his cell, but he remained unmoved by their entreaties. One of the fathers said to him:

"Impose a penance[8059] upon the one who has transgressed, but do not exclude him from your fellowship."

The elder said:

"This is the penance I impose upon him, if he wishes to receive forgiveness for his disobedience: let him clean with his own hands the passageways of all the cells and wash every foul place in the Lavra."

The fathers were ashamed at such words and departed in confusion, marveling at the elder's harsh and unyielding temper. Meeting them, John bowed as was customary and asked what the elder had said to them. They told him of the elder's severity, but did not dare to tell him what penance the elder had appointed for his trial; they were ashamed to repeat such commands. But John persistently begged them to say what his father had assigned him, and, when he learned, rejoiced beyond their expectation, willingly accepting the task set before him, though it was a shameful one. At once he prepared vessels and tools for

cleaning and began eagerly to carry out the command, touching filth with the hands he had once anointed with various perfumes, and defiling with filth the right hand that had been wondrously healed by the Most Pure Theotokos. O profound humility of this wondrous man and true disciple of obedience! The elder was moved when he saw such humility in John, and, coming to him, embraced him and kissed his head, shoulders, and hands, saying:

"What a sufferer for Christ I have made! Behold the true son of blessed obedience!"

John, ashamed at the elder's words, fell prostrate before him as before God; he did not exalt himself over his father's words of praise, but humbled himself yet more and begged him to forgive his transgression. Taking John by the hand, the elder led him into his cell. John rejoiced at this as though Paradise had been restored to him, and he lived with the elder in their former harmony.

A short time later, the Lady of the world, the Most Pure and Most Blessed Virgin, appeared to the elder in a vision by night and said:

"Why have you blocked a spring able to pour forth sweet and abundant water—water better than that which flowed from the rock in the wilderness,[43] water that David longed to drink,[44] water that Christ promised the Samaritan woman?[45] Do not hinder the spring from flowing: it shall flow abundantly, run throughout the whole universe, and water it; it shall cover the seas of heresies and transform them into wondrous sweetness. Let the thirsty hasten to this water; and let those who have no silver of a pure life sell their attachments and, by imitating John's virtue, acquire from her purity in doctrine and in deed. He shall take up the harp of the prophets, the Psalter of David, and sing new songs to the Lord God; he shall surpass Moses and the songs of Miriam.[46] The useless songs of Orpheus,[47] recounted in fables, are nothing beside him; he shall sing a spiritual, heavenly song and imitate the hymns of the Cherubim. He shall make all the churches of Jerusalem

43. Num. 20:11. This refers to the water miraculously brought forth by Moses from the rock by a blow of the staff.

44. 2 Kgdms. 23:15.

45. Jn. 4:14. The Lord promised the Samaritan woman living water, flowing into eternal life, that is, the grace of the Holy Spirit.

like maidens playing timbrels, that they may sing to the Lord, proclaiming the death and Resurrection of Christ; he shall set forth the dogmas of the Orthodox faith and refute heretical false teachings: 'My heart hath poured forth a good word; I say: my song is of the King' (Ps. 44:2)."

In the morning the elder summoned John and said to him:

"O child of obedience to Christ! Open thy mouth to draw in the spirit, and speak with thy lips what thou hast received in thy heart; let thy lips speak of the wisdom thou hast learned through meditation upon God. Open thy mouth not for stories, but for words of truth; not for riddles, but for dogmas. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem, which beholds God—that is, to the Church at peace. Speak not empty words cast upon the air, but those which the Holy Spirit hath inscribed upon thy heart. Ascend the lofty Sinai of the vision of God and the revelation of divine mysteries; and, for thy great humility, by which thou hast descended to the lowest depths, ascend now the mountain of the Church and preach, bringing glad tidings to Jerusalem. Lift up thy voice mightily, for the Mother of God hath spoken many glorious things concerning thee. And I beseech thee to forgive me, for through my roughness and ignorance I was a hindrance to thee."

From that time the blessed John began to write divine books and compose sweet-sounding hymns. He composed the Octoechos, with which, like a spiritual reed pipe, he gladdens the Church of God to this day. John began his first book with these words: "Thy victorious right hand hath been glorified in strength, as is fitting to God."[8065]

And concerning the wondrous healing of his right hand, in an outpouring of joy he cried thus to the Theotokos: "All creation rejoiceth in thee, O Full of Grace."[8066]

John wore upon his head the cloth in which his severed hand had been wrapped, in remembrance of the wondrous miracle of the Most Pure Theotokos. He also wrote the lives of certain saints, composed

46. Ex. 20. As is well known, the hymns of Moses and Miriam after the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea entered into the composition of many hymns of John of Damascus and, among others, served as the basis of the First Ode of the canons.

47. Orpheus – a singer, a hero of Greek myths, whose power of song was so great that he set trees and rocks in motion and tamed wild beasts.

festal homilies and various moving prayers, set forth the dogmas of the faith and many mysteries of theology; he wrote, too, against heretics, especially the iconoclasts, and composed other soul-profiting works, by which the faithful are nourished to this day as with spiritual food, and from which they drink as from a sweet stream.[8067]

Blessed Cosmas, who grew up with him and was taught by the same master, encouraged him in such labors. He urged him to write the Divine books and to compose hymns for the Church, and he himself helped him in this. Afterwards Cosmas was made Bishop of Maiuma by the Patriarch of Jerusalem. After this the same Patriarch summoned the Venerable John and ordained him to the priesthood. But John did not wish to remain long in the world. Shunning worldly glory, he returned to the monastery of the Venerable Sabbas, and, secluded in his cell as a bird in its nest, he devoted himself diligently to the writing of Divine books and to the work of his own salvation. Gathering together all the books he had written before, John read them again and carefully corrected in them whatever he judged should be corrected, especially in words and phrases, so that nothing in them should remain unclear. In such labors, profitable to himself and important for the Church of Christ, and in the ascetic exploits of the monastic life, John spent much time and attained to perfect monasticism and holiness. Having pleased God, he departed to Christ and to His Most Pure Mother[48], and now, worshipping Them not in icons but beholding Their Faces in heavenly glory, he prays for us, that we too may be vouchsafed the same Divine contemplation through his holy prayers and the grace of Christ, to Whom, with His Most Praised and Most Blessed Mother, be honor, glory and worship forever. Amen.

Troparion, Tone 8:

Teacher of Orthodoxy, instructor of piety and purity, luminary of the whole world, divinely inspired adornment of monastics, wise

48. St. John of Damascus reposed around 777, at the age of 104, and was buried in the Lavra of St. Sabbas the Sanctified beside the shrine of the holy founder of the Lavra. In the reign of the Byzantine emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus (1282–1328) his holy relics were translated to Constantinople.

John, thou hast enlightened all with thy teachings, O spiritual flute. Entreat Christ God that our souls be saved.

Kontakion, Tone 4:

Let us praise John, the hymnographer and honorable God-speaker, the instructor and teacher of the Church, and the opponent of its enemies; for, taking up the weapon of the Lord's Cross, he drove away all the delusion of heresies, and, as a fervent intercessor before God, grants forgiveness of transgressions to all.

* * *

Memory of the Venerable John of Polivotsk

Память преподобного Иоанна Поливотского

Saint John from his early youth refrained from food pleasing to the palate and turned away from worldly enjoyments, adorning his life above all with fasting, chastity and mercy; wherefore he was also vouchsafed to be ordained Bishop of Polivotsk[49], having first passed through all the church ranks in lawful order. When the highest governance and care of the people was thus entrusted to him, he increased his exploits as well, adding new labors to the former ones. At that time the Emperor Leo the Isaurian[50], who had unworthily occupied the imperial throne, began to blaspheme the holy icons; the Venerable Father vehemently rebuked this impiety of the Emperor and by his confession of faith preserved his flock from the heretical error of iconoclasm. In his time, once the Agarenes besieged the city of Amorion[51], but were repulsed with the help of God; all the Christians who had fallen captive to the enemy then received their freedom through the efforts of this holy man. His body remains incorrupt even to this day; on the day of Pentecost each year it is taken out of the reliquary and, after being vested in episcopal vestments, is first carried to the Holy Table and set upright, and then raised to a high place, where it remains, supported by two priests for the whole time the Divine service is performed. Of the mir-

49. In Asian Phrygia, in the eighth century.
50. He reigned from 717 to 741.
51. In the Phrygian region.

acles wrought by the Venerable Father, of his healings of the possessed and cures of the sick, it is impossible, by reason of their multitude, to set them down in writing.

* * *

NOTES

8040. Besides this, a part of the relics of St. Great Martyr Barbara, a finger, is kept in Moscow, in the church named for the Holy Great Martyr on Varvarka; there are also on Athos some parts of the relics of St. Barbara. To the miracles cited above, through her intercessory prayer, one must add the miracles of a later time. Thus, through her miraculous intercession, in 1710, during the plague which raged for more than ten months and terribly devastated Kiev and all Little Russia, the deadly pestilence did not touch the Golden-Domed Monastery of St. Michael, where the relics of St. Barbara repose, and not one of the monks of the monastery died of this disease, although the gates of the monastery were constantly open to all who desired spiritual consolation. The same gracious and miraculous intercession was manifested by the Holy Great Martyr Barbara in 1770, when the plague again devastated South Russia, and several times in our own time during the cholera epidemics. Annually, on 4 December, the day devoted to the celebration of the Holy Great Martyr, her honorable relics are solemnly carried around the church of St. Michael's Monastery in the presence of a large gathering of people. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Metropolitan Joasaph Krokovsky of Kiev (1708–1718) composed an akathist to St. Great Martyr Barbara, which is still sung before her holy relics. According to popular belief, a special grace was given by God to St. Great Martyr Barbara: to save from unexpected and untimely death, from pestilence, and from other sudden calamities. This belief is based partly on the Life itself, according to which she besought God to deliver from sudden sickness and unforeseen death every person who would pray in remembrance of her and her sufferings, and partly on the miracles cited above which she performed at St. Michael's Monastery during epidemic diseases. In Roman Catholic churches, St. Barbara is credited, besides the gift of saving from sudden and violent death, also with the gift of saving from storms at sea and from fire on land; the Catholics also consider her the patroness of artillery.

8052. St. John of Damascus attained the highest authority at court under the caliph Walid (705–716), for whom he was the closest adviser and minister. But, having taken upon himself the duties of his new office, he never forgot his highest service, to Jesus Christ, and always strove to remain faithful to the truth of Christ and useful to the Holy Church. Proclaiming the truth of Christ and refuting false teachings became the chief work of John's life. From the very first days of his activity he took up the struggle against the heretics of his time: against the Nestorians, who enjoyed protection in Syria, who divided the human and divine nature in Jesus Christ and taught that a man, Jesus, was born of the Virgin Mary, with whom, from the moment of His conception, God the Word united Himself by His grace and dwelt in Him as in a temple; and against the

Monophysites, or Jacobites, who recognized in Christ one divine nature, which supposedly swallowed up His human nature. Against the latter John of Damascus wrote a fairly extensive and well-founded work in defense of the pure Orthodox faith. In addition, he struggled against Monothelitism, which grew out of Monophysitism and acknowledged in Christ only one divine will, and against the remnants of ancient Gnostic teachings combined with Manichaean false doctrines, namely the heresy of the so-called "Paulicians," who acknowledged, besides the good God who created the pure spirit and revealed Himself in Christianity, also an evil principle, the demiurge, who created the visible world and the human body and revealed himself in Judaism and paganism. According to the teaching of the Paulicians, the Incarnation of the Son of God was only apparent; they rejected all the rites and external institutions of the Church. Finally, John of Damascus also wrote an apology against Mohammedanism, which at that time prevailed in Syria.

8059. *Epitimia*, from the Greek, means "requital, punishment, prohibition." The epitimia was established in the Church for penitents in the remote antiquity and is based on the words of the Apostle Paul, who, giving the Corinthians advice or a rule (canon) for forgiving the sins of a penitent and receiving him into their communion, says: "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment" (*epitimia*), and adds that if they receive him in their love, then he too will be received. In the Trebnik the epitimia is called the "canon (rule) of satisfaction." Thus, according to the Apostle's indication, the epitimia consists in prohibiting the sinner, for a time, from communion with the Church, which is why it is a punishment. At the same time, however, it does not have the significance of a punitive measure, a deprivation of the rights of a member of the Church; it is only a "spiritual remedy." In the language of church canons, the epitimia means the voluntary performance, by the one who has confessed, at the appointment of his spiritual father, of certain works of piety (prolonged prayer, almsgiving, strict fasting, pilgrimage, and the like).

8065. The First Irmos of the First Tone in the Octoechos. The Octoechos was one of the first hymnographic works of St. John of Damascus. According to the words of John, Patriarch of Jerusalem, St. John of Damascus, an unwavering confessor and sufferer for the veneration of the holy icons, inspired by the miraculous healing of his hand, which had been cut off by the enemies of the faith, composed this solemn hymn: "Thy victorious right hand, in strength made glorious, is worthily magnified." Its foundation was the triumphal song of thanksgiving of Moses at the crossing of the Israelites through the Red Sea, after which followed rows of other sacred hymns, which together made up the Octoechos, or Eight-Tone Book (the Sunday services, divided into eight tones). Its appearance brought about a change in the whole structure of the church service. Already during the lifetime of St. John of Damascus his Octoechos was accepted throughout the East, and after some time it passed to the West as well. Afterwards the Octoechos was enlarged by the hymns of other Christian hymn-writers, yet even in its present form the services for the Sundays, in their principal part, belong to St. John of Damascus. The Octoechos contains the service for each day of the week, celebrated in one of the eight tones or melodies, the order of Vespers, Compline, Matins and the Liturgy for the weekdays, and for the Sundays, in addition, the Little Vespers and the Midnight Office. The singing of the Octoechos begins on the weekdays after the Sunday of All Saints and

ends before the Saturday of Meatfare week; on Sundays, however, it begins with the Sunday following the Sunday of All Saints and continues until the Sixth Sunday of the Great Lent. The Octoechos is not used in the divine services outside these intervals, except on the Twelve Great Feasts and on their forefeasts when these fall on weekdays. The Octoechos gave the church service greater definiteness and uniformity. By imparting to church singing both correct uniformity and sentiments worthy of Christian worship, St. John of Damascus by his Octoechos thereby placed a barrier against the disorder that had prevailed in church singing before him. From the many varied melodies he chose for the church hymns chiefly those which are capable of expressing sentiments proper to Christians, and he did not use those which could arouse feelings unbefitting the solemnity of Christianity. He limited himself to eight tones so that the faithful would not be distracted by variety and frequent change of melodies, and so that a fixed number of melodies, holding attention upon melodies that were worthy and at the same time comprehensible to everyone, would awaken fixed and worthy qualities and would establish in the general attention the spirit and content of the prayers sung. This same fixedness of melodies put an end to the arbitrary inventions of an affected, distracted and irreverent art; and the simplicity of the melodies of the Eight-Tone Book, expressing the humble simplicity of Christian prayer, disposes the soul to the same kind of prayer and, drawing it out of the noise of vanity, as it were lifts it up to the throne of God. At the same time the eight tones signify, as it were, the eight voices of the heavenly hierarchy which unceasingly glorify God: the Mother of God, the Angels, the prophets, the apostles, the hierarchs, the martyrs, the venerable and the righteous; and therefore the singing of the Octoechos may spiritually and mystically signify the ceaseless singing of prayer after the likeness of the saints who eternally rejoice in heaven before the throne of God. The musical signs of the Octoechos of St. John of Damascus were the *kryuki* (hook-notation).

8066. Afterwards this solemn hymn, in honor and glorification of the Most Holy Theotokos, entered into the composition of the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great as the *zadostoynik*. Among the other numerous hymns of St. John of Damascus there are in general a great many hymns composed by him in honor of the Mother of God, under whose special gracious protection and intercession he stood. Such are, for example, his canons for the Annunciation, the Dormition, and the Nativity of the Theotokos, "Open to us the doors of mercy," "Most glorious Ever-Virgin, Mother of Christ God, offer our prayer to Thy Son," "On thee I place all my hope," and others. In general, as a church hymn-writer Damascene is higher than in all other respects, and is positively inimitable, for which reason he is also called *Chrysorrhoas* (Golden-Streaming) for his hymns, and this name fully belongs to him: all his hymns deserve the designation of exemplary songs. In all of them is seen the remarkable inspiration characteristic of a lofty singer. Of the sixty-four canons he composed, the most exalted, solemn and joyfully radiant is the canon for holy Pascha. St. John of Damascus also composed the whole Paschal service, after which among the products of human creativity one cannot find another song fuller of sentiments as living as they are lofty, holy and truly unearthly raptures. The canons for the Nativity of Christ, the Theophany of the Lord, and the Ascension of the Lord with their stichera approach the Paschal one. His Sunday services are as excellent in

poetic power as in doctrinal content. Damascene also wrote the beautiful troparion "We venerate Thy most pure image, O Good One." Remarkable also are his antiphons and funeral songs, exemplary and moving songs of a repentant soul. Damascene also composed many stichera and other church hymns. In general Damascene is such a hymnographer that none higher than him existed in the Church before or after.

8067. Apart from his hymns, St. John of Damascus became famous for his theological writings, which give him an honored place among the great Fathers of the Church. The careful study of the philosophy of the Greek scholar Aristotle formed in him a thinker distinct, precise in his concepts and words. St. John was the first of the Fathers of the Church to set forth the theological teaching of the Orthodox Church in a coherent, systematic order, and in this lies his inalienable glory. In his writings Damascene appears as a dogmatist and polemicist, historian and philosopher, orator and church poet. To his three principal works, the *Dialectic*, the *Book on Heresies* and the *Exposition of the Faith*, completely different in subject, he gave one common title, "Fount of Knowledge." Most important of them is the *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, which sets forth in orderly and consistent fashion the systematic teaching on the contemplative truths of Revelation, and which served as a model for theologians both Eastern and Western. Besides this, St. John wrote in the same strict order the *Sacred Parallels*, a comparison of sayings of Holy Scripture on the rules of faith and piety with sayings of the Fathers and teachers of the Church; the subjects here are arranged alphabetically so as to be closer to general understanding; the *Guide*, an explanation of the most important theological expressions, the incorrect understanding of which in antiquity was the cause of heresies; several small dogmatic works: *On Right Reflection*, with an explanation of the teaching of the six Ecumenical Councils; *On the Holy Trinity*, *On the Image of God in Man*, *On the Nature of Man*, etc. Among the works of St. John against heretics, the first place is held by his three discourses against those who reproach the icons; to him also belongs an apology against the Muhammadans, and works against the Nestorians, Monophysites, Monothelites and Manichaeans. Further one should note the brief commentaries on the Epistles of the Apostle Paul, an extensive account of St. Martyr Artemius and his sermons, for example on the Transfiguration of the Lord, the Nativity and Dormition of the Theotokos, the Word on the departed in faith, the instruction on the eight evil thoughts, etc. Finally, Damascene rendered an important service to the order of worship by revising and supplementing the Jerusalem Typikon, composed by St. Sabbas the Sanctified, and by compiling the Menologion.

THE FIFTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 5

5 декабря

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

Life and Ascetic Labors of Our Venerable Father Sabbas the Sanctified

Житие и подвиги преподобного отца нашего Саввы Освященного

Venerable Sabbas was born in the thirty-first year of the reign of the Greek emperor Theodosius the Younger,[1] in the land of Cappadocia, in the village called Mutalaska, which was subject to Caesarea.[2] At first the village was unknown, but afterwards, through the birth of Sabbas in it, it became more famous than Armathem, where the Divine Prophet Samuel grew up (1 Kgdms. 1 ff.). The parents of the blessed Sabbas were John and Sophia, people of noble birth and piety. When the child had reached five years of age, they went to Alexandria,[3] for John was in the service of the emperor and held a high military rank. By Divine providence Sabbas was left, together with the family property, in the care of his mother's brother, Hermias. But since Hermias' wife was wicked and quarrelsome, the boy endured much, and at last he went to his father's brother Gregory, who lived in another village, called Skanda.[4] As a result, enmity arose between Sabbas' uncles. His parents remained for a long time in Alexandria, while Hermias and Gregory quarrelled with one another, and each of them

1. Theodosius II the Younger, grandson of Theodosius the Great, Byzantine emperor, reigned 408–450. The birth of St. Sabbas the Sanctified is dated to the year 439.
2. Cappadocia is an eastern region of Asia Minor. Caesarea is its principal city. Mutalaska, now Talasi, is a village 8 verst from Caesarea.
3. Alexandria was a seaport city in Africa, on the northern shore of Egypt, which carried on extensive trade and was once a stronghold of pagan learning, and later the center of Christian theology.
4. The village of Skanda lay three stadia from Mutalaska, that is, a little more than ½ verst (the Roman stadion equaled 86 sazhens).

wished not so much to have the boy in his keeping as to profit from the property of the boy's father. The blessed youth, who even from his tender years was distinguished by a mature mind, seeing the discord and strife of his uncles, renounced all the property and, withdrawing to the monastery of the Flavians,[5] which lay three and a half versts from Mutalaska, received the angelic habit at the age of eight. Living there, he soon learned the Psalter and the other books of Holy Scripture, advanced in good works, and in everything followed the monastic rule. Some time later, the blessed Sabbas' uncles were reconciled with one another, came to him at the monastery, and began to tempt him, advising him to leave the walls of the holy monastery and, taking a wife, to live on the family estate. But he, desiring to remain in the house of God rather than to live in the dwellings of sinners,[6] and loving the life of the monastery more than the life of the world, did not obey his uncles and rejected their seductive proposal:

"As from serpents," he said, "I flee from those who advise me to depart from the way of God, for evil company corrupts good morals (1 Cor. 15:33), and I fear to bring upon myself the curse with which the Prophet curses those who turn aside into iniquity: 'Cursed are those who turn aside from thy commandments' (cf. Ps. 118:21)." With such words he sent his uncles away with nothing, and he himself began to labor with still greater zeal, mortifying his body by toil and abstinence and bringing it into subjection to the spirit.

When that serpent was overcome, which by property and marriage had tempted him to leave the monastery as from a paradise, another tempter began to tempt the saint: the demon of gluttony. Once, while working in the monastery garden, Sabbas saw a beautiful apple hanging on a tree; he could not restrain himself, plucked the apple, and wished to eat it before the appointed time and the customary blessing. But, remembering that by this fruit the serpent in Paradise had led the first man into sin (Gen. 3:1–24), Sabbas restrained himself, did not eat it, and reproached himself, saying:

5. Today the monastery of St. John the Forerunner on the edge of a cliff.
6. A Psalter expression. Ps. 83:11.

"Beautiful to the sight and pleasant to the taste was that fruit which slew Adam."

And casting the apple to the ground, he trampled it under his feet, trampling underfoot with it also his own thought, and, moreover, crushing the head of the demon of gluttony; and he vowed never to eat apples all his life. From then on he overcame every carnal desire by abstinence, ate little, slept little, and was constantly occupied with labors; his hands were stretched out only to prayer or to work.

And soon the saint, despite his youth, equalled in virtue all the elders who were in that monastery.

It once happened that one of the brethren there, who had the obedience of baking bread, got soaked by the rain; and since it was winter, the sun was not shining, and he had nowhere to dry his clothes, he put them in the bread oven on the firewood and forgot about them. Some time later, the brethren gathered to bake bread and lit the oven, not knowing that the baker had put his clothes there to dry. When the firewood had already caught fire strongly, the baker remembered his clothes and grieved greatly over them. Blessed Sabbas was there too: seeing his brother's sorrow, he did not think of himself, and, making the sign of the Cross, entered the heated oven. And, O wonder! Just as of old the youths in the Babylonian furnace were not burned (Dan. 3:1–100) because of their faith, so the youth Sabbas, for his love toward his brother, came out of the oven unharmed, holding his brother's clothes untouched by the fire, and his own clothing likewise remained unscorched.

The brethren, seeing this miracle, were struck with awe, and said to one another:

"What will this youth become in the future, if from his youth he has already been granted such grace from God!"

The blessed one remained ten years in that monastery, advancing from strength to strength and from glory to glory. Then he desired to go to Jerusalem to venerate the holy places and to visit the fathers who lived in the surrounding desert, to profit from their conversation and to find there a place for his own hermit life. He asked the archimandrite to

release him to the holy city with a prayer and blessing. But the archimandrite did not wish to let him go, saying:

"It is not good for you, being so young, to wander; better remain in one place."

But God, who orders all things for good, commanded the archimandrite not to detain Sabbas.

"Release Sabbas to serve Me in the desert," He revealed to the archimandrite in a vision.

Then, calling the blessed one, the archimandrite gave him his blessing and released him with prayer on his way. He, guided by the right hand of the Most High, came to Jerusalem in his eighteenth year, at the end of the reign of Marcian[7] and in the patriarchate of Juvenal in the holy city. He arrived at the monastery of St. Passarion in the winter season, was received by the archimandrite Elpidius, and was entrusted to the guidance of a certain Cappadocian elder. With him Sabbas spent the winter, longing in his soul for the silent life of a hermit, to which he had long aspired. Having heard of Euthymius the Great,[8] shining with virtue and miracles in the desert lying east of Jerusalem, Sabbas desired to see him. Having obtained the blessing of his superiors, he set out on the journey, and on arriving at the Lavra of the great Euthymius, he remained there some days, waiting until he could see him, since the venerable one did not always come to the church, but only once or twice a week and on certain days. When Saturday came, Sabbas saw the venerable Euthymius going to church and fell before him with earnest entreaty to receive him into his Lavra. But Euthymius, seeing his youth, sent him to a monastery still farther from Jerusalem, under the direction of the blessed Theoctistus,[9] instructing him to care for this

7. Marcian was Byzantine emperor, reigning 450–467. St. Juvenal, 420–458. The withdrawal of Venerable Sabbas the Sanctified to the monastery of Abba Passarion took place in 456. Venerable Passarion was the founder of one of the Jerusalem monasteries, a bishop and the teacher of Venerable Euthymius the Great. [It is celebrated on 11 August and on the Saturday of Cheesefare week.]

8. The memory of Venerable Euthymius the Great, who reposed in 473, is celebrated on 20 January in the vicinity of Jericho: the first, which Euthymius entrusted to the management of his friend and companion Venerable Theoctistus, lay 14 versts from Jerusalem, to the north-east; the second was founded by Venerable Euthymius 4 versts from the first and was under his own direction.

young monk; and he prophesied concerning him that by the grace of Christ he would soon shine in the monastic life more than many others, would be a glorious model for all the Palestinian hermits, and would found a lavra greater than all the lavras in that land.

Received by Theoctistus into the monastery, Sabbas devoted himself wholly to God and performed all the monastic services without murmuring, obediently, with humility and zeal. Being capable and very zealous in the celebration of the Divine services, he was the first to enter the church and the last to leave it. Great in spiritual strength, he was also great and strong in body; therefore, when all the monks in the desert cut only one bundle of twigs for baskets and carried it to the cenobium, Sabbas cut and carried three. Besides this, he sometimes carried water and firewood, and thus strove to be of service to all. For a rather long time he was overseer of the mules, and he fulfilled various other offices as well, doing all of it blamelessly and without fault, so that the fathers of the cenobium marvelled at the great zeal and readiness to serve of the young Sabbas.

Then the devil, wishing to hinder him, devised the following. There was in that monastery one brother, a native of Alexandria, named John. This brother received word of the death of his parents. And the devil prompted him to an unseemly thought for a monk, to concern himself with the disposition of the property left after his parents, and he importuned the abbot Theoctistus with frequent requests to release him to Alexandria, and, besides that, to release Sabbas with him, since Sabbas, being strong in body, could give him great help on the journey. Theoctistus yielded to the insistent requests of the monk and released him to his homeland, and, according to his request, released Sabbas with him as well, and so they set out. When they arrived in Alexandria and began to attend to the disposition of the property left by the deceased, the parents of the blessed Sabbas, John and Sophia, who happened to be there (for Sabbas' father, by reason of his military post, was often sent to Alexandria by imperial command), recognized him. Then a new struggle presented itself to the blessed Sabbas, and a battle

9. The memory of Venerable Theoktistos, companion of Venerable Euthymius the Great, is celebrated on 3 September; Venerable Theoktistos reposed in 467.

greater than the first arose, when his uncles had drawn him out of the monastery into the world, from monasticism to marriage: his parents, now with tearful entreaties, now with tender and enticing words, sought still more to persuade him to take off the black garments and put on bright ones, to live after their example and enter military service. The blessed one, perceiving that he had met his parents and had been recognized by them through an enemy delusion, resolutely resisted his natural feeling. He restrained within himself his natural love for his parents, rejected their insistent entreaties and tears, and, steadfast in his good resolve, answered his parents:

I fear Him who said: "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me" (Mt. 10:37–38). How then can I prefer you to God, your vain life to my cross, the worldly military service to the spiritual host? If earthly kings punish soldiers who have run away from their regiments, how much less will the King of Heaven spare those who have enlisted in His glorious host and then flee from the chosen regiment?

In conclusion, the Blessed Sabbas added:

"If you continue to urge me to abandon the excellent warfare of Christ, I shall no longer call you my parents."

Then John and Sophia, seeing that the heart of their son was unyielding, ceased to urge him, and with bitter weeping, with heavy hearts, let him go; and at parting they begged him to take with him on the road whatever he might need, and they gave him forty gold coins. He, however, would take nothing; yet, so as not to offend his parents altogether, he took only three coins, and these, on returning, he gave into the hands of the Abbot Theoctistus.

At the end of the tenth year of Sabbas's stay in the monastery, the Venerable Theoctistus reposed; in his place the Venerable Euthymius appointed a virtuous monk named Marinus, but he too died after two years, after which the place of superior was taken by a virtuous monk named Longinus. The Blessed Sabbas was then thirty years old. He asked the Hegumen Longinus for permission to shut himself up, for a

more solitary life, in a cave near the monastery, on a cliff to the south. Longinus reported this desire to the great Euthymius. Euthymius, having heard much of Sabbas's blameless life, of his fasting and prayers, his meekness and humility, and his other God-pleasing deeds, wrote to Longinus:

"Do not forbid Sabbas to labor as he wishes."

At first the blessed one was ordered to remain in the cave five days a week, but afterwards, at his request, he was permitted to remain in it for five years. His life in the cave went thus: for five days he fasted, tasting nothing and not leaving the cave; there he occupied himself with weaving baskets, ten of which he wove each day, while prayers to God were constantly on his lips and in his mind. At the coming of Saturday, early in the morning, he came out of the cave to the monastery, carrying with him fifty baskets; on Saturday and Sunday he took part in the common prayer, and having strengthened his body with food, on Sunday evening he went back again to the cave, taking with him palm fronds as many as were needed for weaving fifty baskets. In such labors and fasting he spent five years in that cave, after which the great Euthymius took him with him to the labors of the desert, as a perfected monk who, despite his young years, was the equal of the fathers grown old in virtue. Euthymius therefore called him the "young elder": young in body, he was grey with spiritual wisdom, and old in his blameless life. On the 14th day of January the great Euthymius left the Lavra together with him, taking also the Blessed Domitian,[10] and they set out for the great desert of Ruba[11], to remain there for the whole Great Lent until Palm Sunday.

Once the elder wished to pass through the whole desert lying above the Dead Sea, toward the south, and came with his two disciples, Domitian and Sabbas, to a waterless region. The heat blazed, and the Blessed Sabbas grew weary, faint with thirst, and fell, unable to go

10. The memory of Venerable Dometian of Palestine is celebrated on the Saturday of Cheesefare week.

11. The desert of Ruva lay on the north-western shores of the Dead Sea, between that sea and the present Jerusalem road and the Lavra of Venerable Sabbas the Sanctified.

further. Euthymius took pity on him, and, withdrawing from him to such a distance as a stone may be thrown, began to pray thus:

"O Lord God, give water in this waterless land, that the brother who faints may quench his thirst."

When he had finished praying, he struck the ground three times with a staff that happened to be in his hand, and at once spring water flowed forth. Sabbas drank of the water and was strengthened, and from that time he received a Divine power to endure thirst in the desert. When Palm Sunday came, they returned to the Lavra.

Some time later the Venerable and God-bearing Euthymius reposed; this was under the Patriarch of Jerusalem Anastasius.[12] After the repose of Euthymius, and the death of some other elders of the Lavra, Sabbas, seeing that the monastic rules were being altered, withdrew into the eastern desert near the Jordan, which at that time was being illumined by the life of the Venerable Gerasimus, like a bright star. The Blessed Sabbas was in his thirty-fifth year when he settled alone in the desert, engaged in fasting and unceasing prayer, and making his mind a pure mirror of Divine things. Then the devil began to plot against him. One night at midnight, when the saint was sleeping on the ground after his labors, the devil transformed himself into a multitude of serpents and scorpions and, approaching Sabbas, sought to terrify him. He at once rose to pray, uttering the words of the psalm of David: "Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flieth by day... upon the asp and basilisk shalt thou tread" (Ps. 90:5–13). At these words the demon with all its terrors instantly vanished. A few days later the devil transformed himself into a terrible lion and rushed upon the saint as though wishing to devour him; in rushing, he drew back, rushed again and again drew back. Seeing that the beast now charged and now retreated, the Venerable said to it:

"If you have power from God to devour me, why do you draw back? And if you do not, why do you toil in vain? For by the power of my Christ I shall overcome you, lion!"

12. In 473. Anastasius I was Patriarch of Jerusalem from 468 to 478.

And at once the demon, which had appeared in the form of a beast, fled in shame. From this time God subjected all beasts and serpents to Sabbas, and he went among them as among gentle sheep.

Walking through the desert, Sabbas once met four Saracens,[13] very hungry and weary; he bade them sit down and poured out for them from his garment roots called melagria, on which he himself fed, and reeds' pith.[14] They ate and were refreshed, and having noted the place where Sabbas was, they went away; and a few days later they came to him with bread, cheese and dates, in thanks for his kindness in feeding them on the day of their hunger. Sabbas was moved and, with tears, said in his soul:

"Woe is me, my soul! These men are so grateful for a small kindness shown them once! What then do we do, who receive every hour the unspeakable gifts of God, and are ungrateful, living in idleness and negligence, not fulfilling His holy commandments!"

After this there came to Sabbas a virtuous monk named Anthus,[15] who had long lived with the Venerable Theodosius; he came to love the Blessed Sabbas, grew attached to him, and began to live with him. Once the Agarenes[16] attacked them and sent one of their company ahead to kill them; but by the prayers of the venerable fathers the earth suddenly opened and swallowed the Agarene, and the remaining Agarenes, seeing this miracle, were frightened and fled.

Through his companion Anthus the Blessed Sabbas afterwards became acquainted with the Venerable Theodosius, and they conceived a great love for one another. At the end of the fourth year of his stay in the desert, St. Sabbas, during his wanderings through the desert, once

13. Saracens, otherwise Arabs, who dwelt on the Arabian peninsula and in Syria, and in part also in Palestine.

14. Melagria: a little-known desert plant of Palestine with a slightly bitter taste. Here "reed" should be understood as the so-called fragrant reed, a plant distinguished by an aromatic and pleasant but bitter-tasting root. It was usually used to prepare incense for the services, as well as healing aromatic oils and ointments; but the desert-dwellers also ate the fresh shoots and the soft pith of this plant.

15. His memory is on 12 December.

16. Hagarenes, otherwise Saracens, were the Arabian Bedouins. They were called Hagarenes because, according to Hebrew tradition, they were descendants of Ishmael, son of Hagar, Abraham's slave-woman. This name, which originally designated this nomadic tribe, was later extended by Christian writers to all Arabs, and then came to mean Muslims in general.

ascended a high hill[17] where the Blessed Empress Eudocia, wife of the Emperor Theodosius the Younger, had once gladly received a soul-profitable instruction from the great Euthymius.[18] There Sabbas spent the night in his customary prayers. And there was a vision to him. He saw a bright Angel of God, who showed him a valley through which a stream had once flowed south of Siloam,[19] and said:

"If you wish to people this desert as a city, turn to the eastern side of this stream, and you will see before you a cave which no one has occupied; enter and settle in it. He who gives 'to the beast its food, and to the young ravens which cry to Him' (Ps. 146:9), will also provide for you."

When the vision vanished and day came, Sabbas came down from that hill, by the help of God found the cave which the Angel had shown him in the vision, and settled in it. He was then forty years old. In this year the Patriarch of Jerusalem Anastasius died, leaving Martyrius after him in the episcopal see;[20] in the same year the Emperor Zeno, having slain the tyrant Basiliscus, recovered the imperial power.[21]

The cave in which the Venerable Sabbas had settled had a very inconvenient entrance; therefore he hung a rope by which he would descend from the cave to fetch water from the lake called Heptastomos, which lay fifteen stadia from the cave.[22] While living in this cave, the Venerable at first fed on the herbs growing around it. But God, who had commanded Sabbas to settle there, sent him food also through men, barbarians,[23] as once through ravens to the Prophet Elijah at Horath (3 Kgdms. 17:5–6). Some time later four Saracens passed by, found the cave of the Venerable Sabbas and wished to climb up into it, but could not, so inconvenient was its entrance. Seeing them from

17. This hill is today's Muntar.
18. Empress Eudocia, wife of Theodosius the Younger, reposed in Jerusalem in 460.
19. Siloam: the spring or pool of Siloam and the bath built beside it, the Siloam bath, were located on the south-eastern side of Jerusalem at the foot of the mountains Zion and Moriah.
20. This was in 478. Martyrius was Patriarch of Jerusalem from 478 to 486.
21. Zeno was Byzantine emperor from 474 to 491. In 475 Basiliscus took imperial power from him and reigned until the end of 477, when he was imprisoned by Zeno in a fortress, where he died of starvation together with his whole family.
22. Heptastomos, in Greek, means "Seven-mouthed". 16 stadia is about 4 versts.
23. That is, wild foreigners, who in the present case were the nomadic Saracens.

above, the blessed one lowered a rope for them so that they might enter to him by it. Having entered the cave, the Saracens found nothing belonging to Sabbas; they were amazed at his life and piety and, moved with compassion, agreed to bring him food. Thus they often came to him and brought bread, cheese, dates and other food. And the Venerable remained alone in the cave for five years, conversing with God alone and overcoming the invisible enemies by his unceasing prayers. Then God was pleased to entrust to him the souls of many and made him the teacher and shepherd of the rational sheep. For after five years of his silent sojourn in the cave, many came to him from various places, desiring to live with him; he received them all gladly and showed each a suitable place to dwell. They built themselves cells and lived in a God-pleasing manner, looking upon the virtuous life of the Venerable Sabbas as a model. In a short time up to seventy brethren had gathered around him; among them were distinguished: John, who later became abbot of the new lavra; James, who later built the lavra on the Jordan called Pirgion;[24] Firmin and Severian, of whom one founded the lavra at Machmas[25] and the other a monastery at Variha; Julian, builder of the lavra on the Jordan called Nesklerava;[26] and many other holy men whose names are written in the books of eternal life; over all of them the Venerable Sabbas presided. To each newcomer he gave a fitting place, on which there was a small cave and cell. By the grace of God, the number of ascetics zealous for the angelic life grew to seventy, and their head, guide and shepherd was Sabbas. He resolved to build a tower on the mountain which would be a bulwark of their community; he gathered his disciples and began to build it, and it served as the foundation of his great Lavra.

When the number of brethren thus began to increase, and the Lavra[27] began to be established on the hill on the north side of the stream, the Venerable built a small church in the valley, in the middle of the

24. The monastery received this name from its fortified towers; from the Greek word *pyrgos*, tower, fortress. *Pyrgion* means a monastery with towers.
25. Today's Michmash.
26. The monastery in Variha or Karparvariha, today Beni-Naim, to the south of Hebron. All these monastic communities were situated in the desert along the course of the Jordan, not far from it.

dried-up watercourse; and when someone ordained to the rank of presbyter came to him, he asked him to celebrate the Holy Liturgy, while he himself, out of humility, did not wish to accept ordination and did not raise any of the brethren to the priesthood. Since the spring was far from that place, water was lacking. And so, one night the saint prayed, saying:

"Lord God of hosts! If it is Thy will that this place be inhabited to the glory of Thy Most Holy Name, look upon us, Thy servants, and grant us water to quench our thirst!"

During this prayer a voice seemed to the saint to come from the stream; he looked there and, by the light of the full moon, saw a wild ass which was digging the earth with its foot and, putting its lips to the hole, drinking water. The Venerable at once went down and began to dig himself in the place where he had seen the ass; having dug a little, Sabbas found spring water, and there formed an abundant spring, sufficient for the whole Lavra and never diminishing.[28]

Another night, when Sabbas was walking around the stream singing the Psalms of David, there appeared at the edge of the chasm west of the stream a column of fire, fixed in the earth, its top touching the sky; and the saint stood in prayer until the dawn. At daybreak he went to the place where he had seen the column and found a large, wondrous cave, like a church, made by God and not by human hand; its entrance faced south, and sufficient light entered it from the sun's rays. Having adorned that cave, Sabbas made a church there and commanded the brethren to gather in it every Saturday and Sunday for worship; he

27. The present Lavra of Venerable Sabbas the Sanctified. As to the name of his monastery as a Lavra, its meaning is as follows. *Lavra* in Greek is a part of a city, a lane: properly a row of cells arranged around the dwelling of the superior, in the form of lanes in a city, enclosed by a fence or wall. Monks in lavras led a hermit's life and labored each in his own cell, gathering together for the Divine Service on the first and last day of the week, and on the remaining days keeping strict silence; life in the lavras was much harder than in other monasteries. From ancient times the name Lavra has been applied to populous monasteries of great importance. The name first appeared in Egypt and then in Palestine. At present the name Lavra is used among us exclusively as an honorary title.

28. The writer of the life of Venerable Sabbas, the monk Cyril, who described Sabbas's life from the words of his disciples, adds to this: "Therefore even to this day there is water in the midst of the Lavra; it brings great consolation to the fathers, and in winter it does not increase nor in summer does it diminish, although almost all draw from it."

himself moved there, built himself a cell near this not-made-by-hands church, on a high crag, and made a secret passage to the church; through it he went to the church to pray day and night.

The number of brethren increased daily – about a hundred and fifty gathered – and cells were already being built on both sides of the stream. At the same time the fathers acquired draft animals, both for building the Lavra and for other needs. For Sabbas took care that all necessary things be in the Lavra, so that for this reason the brethren should not be compelled to go out of the Lavra into the world and come into contact with worldly turmoil and vanity. The monks, well shepherded by the Venerable, bore fruit worthy of their calling, and made their bodies spiritual before that incorruption which we hope to receive in the future life. But the consecration of the aforementioned cave, that is, of the church created by God, Sabbas postponed, not wishing to accept ordination to the priesthood and considering, in his humility, the desire to be counted among the clergy to be the beginning and root of ambitious thoughts. On a high, crag-like rock rising above the church, the Venerable Sabbas built himself a tower, and within the cave, as in a shell, having found a hidden path leading to the tower, he withdrew into it to perform his rule and ascetic labors. The fame of the Venerable Sabbas also grew, and many gold offerings were brought to him by God-loving people, and he used the gold for the building of the Lavra. Also the most holy Patriarch of Jerusalem Martyrius loved Sabbas greatly, honored him and sent him what was necessary.

The blessed Martyrius died in the eighth year of his patriarchate, and after him the throne was taken by Sallustius;[29] at that time the Venerable Sabbas was in his forty-eighth year of life. At this time there appeared in the Lavra some corrupt monks, pleasure-seekers, "not having the Spirit" (Jude 1:19), as the Scripture says, who had long unjustly accused the saint and in every way grieved him. Thus often tares grow among wheat and thorns among the vine; so also among the Apostles one proved to be a traitor,[30] and Elisha had the faithless disciple Gehazi.[31] These corrupt brethren, or rather false brethren, plotted

29. Sallustius was Patriarch of Jerusalem from 486 to 494.
30. That is, Judas Iscariot.

evil against the saint and went to the Holy City to the patriarch with a request that he appoint them an abbot. When asked where they were from, they answered:

"We live by one desert stream."

By this answer they wished to conceal the name of the blessed Sabbas, for they knew that his name was renowned and that all remembered him with love.

The patriarch asked them many times and pressed for an answer as to where they were from. Against their will they said that they were from the stream which is called after a certain monk named Sabbas. The patriarch asked:

"Where then is Sabbas?"

They, not answering the question, began to slander the blessed one, saying that he was a coarse, unskilled man, that he could not lead so numerous a brotherhood, could not, by reason of his coarseness and ignorance, govern such a Lavra. To their slander they added also that Sabbas did not wish to accept ordination himself and did not allow any of the brethren to be ordained. At this slander, there happened to be before the patriarch an honorable and memorable man, named Cyriacus, presbyter of the renowned church of the Resurrection of Christ and keeper of the Life-giving Cross of the Lord. Having heard the slander, he asked:

"Did you take Sabbas into that place, or did Sabbas take you in?"

They answered:

"Sabbas took us in, but he is coarse and cannot govern us now that we have multiplied."

Then Cyriacus said to them:

"If Sabbas was able to gather you together in that desert place, then all the more, with God's help, can he also shepherd you."

They could make no answer to this and fell silent. And the patriarch, deferring the examination until morning, at once sent for the holy Sabbas, inviting him with honor, as though on some other matter. The

31. 4 Kgdms. 5:20–27. Having obtained by deceit two talents of silver and two changes of clothing for the healing of Naaman from leprosy by the Prophet Elisha, Gehazi was himself punished for his covetousness with leprosy and removed from the prophet.

blessed one arrived, and the patriarch said nothing to him about the slanderers, and said nothing to the slanderers, nor did he rebuke them; but at once ordained the Venerable Sabbas, though against his will, to the presbyterate.[32] Having ordained him, he said to the slanderers:

"Here is your father and the abbot of your Lavra, chosen from above by God, not by men. I have only confirmed the divine choice."

Having said this, the patriarch took the holy Sabbas and those monks with him and set out for the Lavra, consecrated the church created by God, blessed the whole Lavra, and, enjoining all the brethren to obey their abbot, the blessed Sabbas, returned back.

When the blessed Sabbas was in his fifty-third year, after the death of Zeno, Anastasius[33] came to the throne. In that same year there came to the Lavra a God-pleasing man, by birth an Armenian, named Jeremiah, with two disciples, Peter and Paul. The Venerable Sabbas rejoiced greatly at them, gave them the cave in which he had at first lived alone on the stream, and allowed them to perform their prayer rule in Armenian in the small church on Saturdays and Sundays; thus little by little the Armenians multiplied in the Lavra. At the same time there also came to the Lavra our Venerable Father John, surnamed the Silent; he had been bishop of the city of Colonias, but for God's sake he left his episcopal see and, concealing his rank, labored in the Lavra as a simple monk.

Venerable Sabbas imitated St. Euthymius the Great, who was accustomed each year to depart into the wilderness on the 14th day of January and spend all Great Lent there. In imitation of him, Venerable Sabbas likewise did so in the same month of January, but not on the same day, for he waited until the twentieth, in order to celebrate the commemoration of the Great Euthymius in the Lavra. After its celebration, he departed into the wilderness and, withdrawing from men and drawing near to God in thought and prayer, remained there until Palm Saturday.

Once, as was his custom, he left the Lavra and, as he walked near the Dead Sea, saw a small desert island[34]. He wished to spend the days

32. From this he received the title "the Sanctified", that is, in today's usage, *hieromonk*: for in those times monks and abbots in general seldom accepted the priesthood.

of the Fast there and set out toward it; but demonic envy hindered him, and he fell into a pit he encountered on the way, from which smoke and fire issued as though from a dark furnace. Sabbas scorched his face and beard, injured other parts of his body as well, and fell grievously ill. When he returned to the Lavra, the brethren recognized him only by his voice, so badly had his face been scorched. He lay for many days without a voice, until Divine Power descended upon him from on high, healed him, and granted him authority over unclean spirits. His beard never afterward grew as it had been before, but became small and sparse; and he gave thanks to God that his beard had diminished, lest he grow vain in its beauty.

The following year, again according to custom, he departed into the wilderness with his disciple Agapitus. After several days, Agapitus, overcome by weariness and hunger, lay down upon the sand and fell asleep, while the blessed Sabbas stood some distance away praying. Suddenly a huge lion appeared, stood over the sleeping Agapitus, and began to sniff him from head to foot. Seeing the lion over his disciple, the blessed Sabbas feared that it might devour him as he slept, and at once prayed fervently for his disciple, that God would preserve him from the beast. God heard His servant, shut the lion's mouth, and the lion, having done Agapitus no harm, ran into the wilderness as though driven by a whip.

As it fled, it struck the sleeper's face with its tail. He awoke, trembled at the sight of the lion, and ran to the holy father; and Sabbas began to instruct him not to give himself over to prolonged sleep, lest he one day become food for beasts, especially invisible ones.

In one of the following years, the blessed one went in the same manner, according to custom, through the wilderness with the same disciple, north of the Jordan, and found a cave in a mountain, and in it a clairvoyant hermit. After offering a prayer and beginning a conversation, the hermit asked in astonishment:

33. Anastasius I Dicorus or the Thracian, Byzantine emperor, reigned 491–518.

"What has brought you to us, wondrous Sabbas? Or who showed you this place? Behold, by God's mercy I have been here thirty-eight years, and have seen not one person. How did you come here?"

The blessed Sabbas answered:

"God, who revealed my name to you, also showed me this place."

After their conversation, which was profitable to the soul, they exchanged kisses, and Sabbas departed into the wilderness with his disciple. The time to return to the Lavra was drawing near, and Sabbas said to his disciple:

"Come, brother, let us take leave of the servant of God in the cave."

When they arrived, they found him kneeling, his face turned toward the east. They thought he was praying and waited a long while. The day began to wane toward evening, and Sabbas, seeing that the elder still did not rise from prayer, said, "Bless us, father."

But there was no answer.

Sabbas came closer to him and saw that he had died. Then Sabbas addressed his disciple, saying:

"Come near, my son; let us commit the body of the saint to burial, for God sent us here for this purpose."

Having performed the customary funeral singing over the departed, they buried him in that same cave, blocked the entrance with a stone, and returned to the Lavra.

In the year when the church built by God was consecrated, the blessed one's father John, who wielded great authority in the district of Isauria[35], died in Alexandria; and his blessed mother Sophia, already very old, sold all her property and came to Jerusalem to her son Sabbas with a great deal of money. He received her and persuaded her to take the monastic tonsure; after living for a little while in the monastic life, she reposed in the Lord. Sabbas spent the money she had brought on the needs of the monastery and on building guesthouses: he built one near Jericho,[36] and another in the Lavra, so that the first might lodge lay travelers, and the other monks. While the guesthouse was being built in the Lavra, Venerable Sabbas sent a brother with the monas-

35. Isauria: a small mountainous region in the south of Asia Minor.
36. Jericho: a city on the western bank of the Jordan, not far from Jerusalem.

tery's livestock to Jericho, to bring back timber for the construction. On the way back it was very hot, and the monk was sorely thirsty; since there was no water anywhere, for that region was desert and waterless, he fell to the ground, exhausted by the heat. Then he remembered the holy elder and cried out:

"Lord God of my abba Sabbas, do not forsake me!"

At once a cloud appeared above him, sent down dew, and refreshed him and the livestock carrying the logs; and the cloud accompanied him all the way to the Lavra, overshadowing him and cooling him from the heat. This came to pass through the prayers of his holy father Sabbas, whose name he had called upon in his distress.

Once during the Fast, Venerable Sabbas wished to ascend Mount Castellion, which lies twenty stadia north of the Lavra[37]. The mountain was inaccessible to men and fearsome because of its dangerous and difficult approach and the terrors that occurred there: many demons had made their lair on that mountain and frightened passersby with various apparitions.

But the Venerable One, having chosen the Most High as his refuge, according to the word of the Psalmist (Ps. 90:9), ascended that mountain, sprinkled it on every side with oil taken from the lamp before the Holy Cross, and, having fenced himself about with the sign of the Cross as with an impregnable wall, dwelt there throughout Great Lent. At first, however, he had to contend with the demons every day. They assailed him, now in the form of beasts, now transformed into reptiles, now as birds, uttering cries, shrieks, and noise, so that the Venerable One, being human, grew afraid and was about to descend from the mountain. But He who had once strengthened Anthony the Great in a like struggle with demons[38] appeared also to this saint and commanded him to be courageous, trusting in the power of the Cross. And the blessed one dwelt there without fear, driving far from himself by prayer and the sign of the Cross all the terrors brought upon him by the

37. Castellion: the present Khirbet Mird, at a distance of about 3½ versts from the Lavra of Sabbas the Sanctified.

38. That is, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, amid the most cruel temptations, appeared to Venerable Anthony the Great in the form of a bright cloud and strengthened him, encouraging him with a divine voice that He was always with him.

demons. At the end of Great Lent, while the saint stood praying by night that this place might be cleansed of the unclean spirits that had made their lair there, the demons suddenly began their last and most dreadful assault against him. A great multitude of them appeared—as they customarily appear, in the forms of beasts, reptiles, and birds—and attacked the saint with loud cries; it seemed that the whole mountain was shaking. But the saint was not in the least afraid and continued to pray to God. Then the demons cried out:

"Woe to us! What we suffer from you, Sabbas! Was it not enough for you to settle the valley by the stream? Was the cave and the crag not enough for you? You have made the wilderness through which you passed habitable! You have come here too, into our dwelling, to drive us out of it! Behold, we are already leaving; we cannot withstand you, for God helps you!"

And at once, with weeping and wailing, loud cries and dreadful noise, they flew away from the mountain that night in the form of ravens. Shepherds and their flocks were spending the night not far from that mountain; they saw the demons flying away from it, heard their cries, and came to Venerable Sabbas to tell him of this. He gave thanks to God for the expulsion of the demons and, when the days of the Fast had passed, returned to the Lavra to celebrate with the brethren the approaching feast of the Resurrection of Christ. After the feast days had passed, he took several of the brethren, came again to Castellion, and began to cleanse the place and build cells. While they were working, they found beneath the hill a large vaulted house, excellently built of fine stone and suitable for habitation. They cleared and adorned the house, made a church in it, and consecrated it. Thus Venerable Sabbas established a coenobium there. While this coenobium was being established, its food supplies once ran out. And behold, an Angel of the Lord appeared in a vision to Marcian, the superior of the coenobium near holy Bethlehem,[39] and said:

"Behold, Marcian, you sit at ease and have everything you need, while the servant of God Sabbas labors at Castellion with the brethren

39. Bethlehem: a small town in the tribe of Judah, two hours' journey south of Jerusalem, the place of the Nativity of Christ.

for love of God, and has neither the food nor the drink he needs, nor anyone to bring him what he requires. Therefore send them food without delay, lest they grow faint with hunger."

Marcian at once loaded beasts of burden with various provisions and sent them to Castellion, to Venerable Sabbas. The Venerable One received what had been sent and gave thanks to God, who provides for His servants.

Having established the coenobium, Sabbas gathered there a sufficient number of brethren and entrusted it to a certain hermit, Paul, who had lived for a long time with his disciple Theodore. But after some time Paul reposed, and Theodore assumed the governance. He brought to the monastery his brother Sergius and another Paul, his uncle, who later governed Castellion and then became bishops of Aila and Amathus.[40]

Having founded the coenobium in Castellion, the Venerable Sabbas took every care to fill it with men of virtue, experienced in ascetic labors and in the monastic life; and he did not permit men of the world who wished to be tonsured, nor beardless youths, to dwell either in the Castellion coenobium or in the Lavra. For them he built yet another small coenobium on the north side, and gave them experienced instructors, who were to teach the beginners the rules of monastic life. The beginners were first of all to learn the Psalter and the whole order of the prayer chant, and also to come to know the entire monastic rule; then they were to accustom themselves to ascetic exercises and labors, to guard their minds from worldly and vain recollections and to resist evil thoughts, to restrain their will and be obedient, meek, humble, silent, vigilant and cautious, and to guard themselves from the snares of the enemy. Those who successfully took in these principles of the monastic life, the Venerable Sabbas transferred to the larger coenobium or to the Lavra; and some of the beginners, especially the younger ones, he sent to the Venerable Father Theodosius, who had by then left the Church of the Kathisma and established a monastery thirty-five stades west of the Lavra [41].

40. Amathus: a city on the island of Cyprus, today Palaeo-Limassol. Aila: the southernmost city of Palestine, situated at the head of the Gulf of the Red Sea; today ruins near Aqaba.

Both of them, Sabbas and Theodosius, were in all things of one mind and in agreement with each other; therefore the people of Jerusalem called them a new Apostolic pair, like the pair of Peter and Paul. The leadership over all the monastic brotherhood was entrusted to them. This came about in the following way. After the death of the blessed Archimandrite Marcian, all the monks from the lavras and monasteries, from the mountains and the deserts, gathered at the episcopal residence before Patriarch Sallustius, who was then ill, and by common consent they presented to him Theodosius and Sabbas, that he might ordain them archimandrites and superiors of all the monasteries situated around the holy city, because these holy men were hermits, had no property at all, were adorned both in life and in word, and were filled with divine gifts. From that time the Venerable Theodosius presided over the cenobitic monasteries, and the Venerable Sabbas over the hermit fathers.

When, after the repose of Patriarch Sallustius, Elias [42] was raised to the throne in his place, the blessed Sabbas at that time was negotiating for a plot of land adjoining his Lavra; he wished to build cells on it for monks coming from afar. The owner, however, asked a large sum of gold, while the elder then had only a half-gold piece [43]; nevertheless, placing his hope in God, in Whom he believed deeply with love, Sabbas said to the seller:

"Take this now, brother, as a deposit until morning; and if in the morning I do not give the full sum, then let me forfeit the deposit."

During the night, toward dawn, the saint was standing in prayer; suddenly a certain stranger came in and, placing in his hands a hundred and seventy gold coins, at once departed without saying who he was or whence he came. Marveling at the providence of God and giving thanks to God, the Venerable gave the money to the seller and built a second

41. The Kathisma church, in Greek, means "Seat" (the "Sitting-place"); it was built by a pious widow in honor of the Most Holy Theotokos at the place called "the Ancient Seat", in the vicinity of Jerusalem. This place received its name from the "Seat", or elevated platform, set up there by Constantine the Great, where for a long time afterward the rite of the Elevation of the Cross of the Lord was performed.

42. Elias II was Patriarch of Jerusalem from 494 to 517.

43. *Zlatitsa*: a gold coin, a chervonets.

guesthouse for the lodging of brethren coming from distant lands. Also, for the Castellion coenobium he bought two hostels for travelers, one in the holy city near the Tower of David [44], and the other in Jericho.

At this time the Venerable Theodosius the Great left that church and established a cenobitic monastery, in which about 700 brethren labored. This monastery was at a distance of a little over six versts from the Lavra of the Venerable Sabbas.

At that time there came to the Lavra two brothers by birth from Isauria, named Theodulus and Gelasius, like second Bezalel and Oholiab, skilled builders of the tabernacle (Ex. 31:2–6), whom God had sent to the Venerable Sabbas; with their help he completed the building of the Lavra. He added still more cells, built a hospital and a bakery, a bath beside the stream, and a large church in the name of the Most Pure Mother of God; for that church not made by hands which God had pointed out to the Venerable by a pillar of fire had already become too small and during the services could not hold all the brethren, who had by then gathered in great numbers; therefore near it Sabbas built another church, larger and more spacious, in the name of the Most Holy Mother of God, and it was consecrated by Patriarch Elias. In this church of the Most Holy Theotokos Sabbas ordered the brethren to gather for the praise of God, and he transferred the Armenians to the Church of the Epiphany and established there the all-night vigil on Sundays and great feasts.

Some of the Armenian brethren at that time followed the vain heretical teaching of Peter, surnamed the Fuller [8116]: to the Angelic Trisagion hymn they added the words:

"Who wast crucified for us, have mercy on us."

To eradicate this error among the brethren, the blessed Sabbas ordered the Armenians to sing the Trisagion not in Armenian but in Greek.

44. The Tower of David lies on the northern corner of Zion, where the latter joins by a mountain chain with the northern hills, near the Jaffa Gate, where today stands the citadel of el-Kala'a, consisting of several towers of various sizes and irregular shape.

Thus they sang the whole service in Armenian, but the Trisagion in Greek, and in this way those erroneous words of Peter the Fuller were no longer added to the Trisagion by the Armenians.

So well did Sabbas govern everything. But again those slanderers of whom it was spoken above, at the instigation of the devil, envied his good governance and rose up against him with hatred. They drew to their side as many as forty brethren, inexperienced in monastic life, corrupt in manners and unwise, and they caused the saint much trouble. Then Sabbas, valiant against the demons but meek toward men, yielding to their unjust anger, left the Lavra, went off into the country of Scythopolis [45], and settled in a desert beside a river called the Gadarene [46]. Finding a lion's cave, he entered it and, having prayed, lay down to sleep on the lion's bed, for night had come. At midnight the lion came, and finding the elder asleep on its lair, it seized his garment in its teeth and dragged him out of the cave, wishing him to yield its place. The Venerable awoke, yet he was not frightened at seeing the terrible lion, but at once rose and began to perform the midnight prayers, and the lion went out and waited until he had completed the appointed prayers. When he had finished the Midnight Office, the elder sat down again in the same place where the lion had lain, and the lion came in again and, seizing with its teeth the edge of his garment, began to drag the holy father out of the cave. Then the elder said to the lion:

"Beast! The cave is spacious; there is room enough for us both, and we can live together, for one Creator made us. But if you do not wish to be with me, then you had better go away from here; I am worthier than you, for I was created by the hand of God and have been honored with His image."

Hearing this, the lion was ashamed before the elder and went away.

The people of Scythopolis and of Gadara learned that the blessed one was living in that cave, and they began to come to him. Among

45. Scythopolis, today Beisan, a city of Palestine, lay on the great ancient caravan road from Damascus to Egypt, which ran along the eastern side of the Lake of Gennesaret, crossed the Jordan and stretched further toward Egypt. Scythopolis was at a distance of 100 versts from Jerusalem.

46. Beyond the Jordan, near the present Mkes on the river Yarmuk, today Sheriat el-Menadire, not far from the city of Gadara on the Lake of Gennesaret.

them was a youth named Basil, who had left the world, been tonsured by the Venerable Father Sabbas, and had come to live with him. Robbers heard of the tonsure of Basil and supposed that he had brought much gold with him into the cave to the Venerable Sabbas, since this youth was of noble and wealthy family. At night the robbers attacked them, but found nothing with them, and, marveling at their non-possessiveness, went away. And suddenly they saw: two large, terrible lions were coming toward them. They thought that this was God punishing them for daring to attack His servants. And they cried out to the beasts with a loud voice:

"We adjure you by the prayers of Father Sabbas: get off the road, do not meet us!"

Hearing the name of Saint Sabbas, the lions ran away as though driven off with a whip. The robbers, astonished at this miracle, returned to the Venerable and told what had happened; they repented of their evil deeds, ceased to practice robbery, and began to live by their own labors.

When word of this occurrence spread, many began to come to Sabbas, for in a few days he had built himself a cell. But as soon as Sabbas saw that worldly people had begun to disturb him, like a bird seeking solitude and silence he secretly withdrew to another desert place; and he committed the brethren to the Lord, setting an abbot over them. Having spent a fairly long time in silence, the Venerable returned again to the Lavra, hoping that the discontented had ceased to murmur and to bear malice; but it turned out that they had not amended, but continued to abide in their malice, and their number had grown still more, to about sixty persons. He lamented over them as lost, and admonished them as a father: against their insolence he set long-suffering, against hatred, love, and he animated his words with spiritual wisdom and sincerity; but then, seeing that they grew still more firm in evil, acted shamelessly and would not walk the path of humility, he left the Lavra and withdrew into the country of Nicopolis [47]; there he settled beneath the so-called Carob Tree [48]. Sabbas fed on the fruit of that tree and

47. The present Amwas, on the road from Ramla to Jerusalem.

sheltered beneath its branches. The owner of that district, learning of Sabbas, came to him and built him a cell on that spot, and within a few days, by the grace of Christ, brethren gathered to the Venerable; thus a coenobium was formed in that place. The blessed Sabbas lived there, while his enemies in the Lavra spread a rumor among the brethren that Sabbas had been eaten in the desert by wild beasts; they went to the blessed Patriarch Elias and said:

"Our father, during his wanderings through the desert around the Dead Sea, has been torn to pieces by lions; we beg your holiness to give us an abbot."

The blessed Elias, however, knowing the life of Sabbas from his youth, said to the monks:

"I do not believe you, for I know that the Lord is just. He will not disregard the many good deeds of your father, nor will He permit him to be eaten by beasts. Go rather and seek your father, or sit in your cells and keep silence, until God reveals him."

So the enemies of Sabbas returned in shame.

The feast of the dedication of the Church of the Resurrection of the Lord in Jerusalem arrived, and all the bishops and abbots of Palestine gathered together; the Venerable Sabbas also came, with several brethren from the monastery of Nicopolis. The Patriarch rejoiced greatly on seeing him, and in private began to persuade him to return once more to the Lavra. But he refused, saying that it was beyond his strength to govern and care for so great a multitude of brethren, and he asked for forgiveness. But the Patriarch said:

"If you do not fulfil my request and counsel, then do not appear before my eyes: I cannot bear that others should possess the fruits of your labours."

Then the Blessed Sabbas, although against his own will, revealed to the Patriarch the reason for his departure from the Lavra:

48. The carob tree, or locust tree, very well known in Syria and in the East, has a rough and thick trunk with ash-grey bark and many crooked spreading branches and boughs covered with thick leaves; its fruit is known among us in dried form under the name of Constantinople pods.

"Let me not be held guilty of the quarrels and divisions of the brethren," he added, and he related the matter of the enemies who had risen up against him.

Sabbas could not disobey the Patriarch, and he submitted: he appointed as abbot of the Nicopolis monastery his disciple who had come with him from Nicopolis, and himself departed for his own Lavra. The Patriarch sent with him the following decree to the brethren:

"I declare to you, brethren in Christ, that your father Sabbas is alive and has not been eaten by beasts, as you have heard and related. He came to me for the feast, and I detained him, considering it unjust that he should abandon his Lavra, which he established by the help of God through his labours; I have persuaded him to return to it. Therefore receive your father with hospitality and with due honour, and obey him in all things, since it was not you who chose him, but he who gathered you. If any of you, proud and disobedient, will not humble themselves and submit to him, we command them to leave the Lavra at once: it is not fitting that this father should be without his place."

When this message was read in the Lavra in the midst of the church, the enemies of Sabbas, blinded by malice, raised an outcry and confusion, accusing the innocent and pure-hearted holy father; some reproached him, abused him and slandered him; others, taking their garments and belongings, prepared to leave the Lavra; and some, seizing axes and crowbars, rushed to the cell which the Venerable Sabbas himself had built, and in their frenzy razed it to its foundations, cast the timber and stone down into the torrent, and went off to the Lavra of Souka[49]. The abbot of that Lavra, Aquilinus, a man pleasing to God, knowing their malice, did not receive them, and drove them from his Lavra. Then they went to the stream of Fekoa[50], built cells for themselves there, and settled. Thus were these tares rooted out of the Lavra, and the remaining brethren, like wheat, bore fruit pleasing to God, and, increasing, offered to God unhindered purity of heart. A little time

49. The Lavra of Souka was founded by Venerable Chariton (memory 28 September) at a cave where he first lived in solitude, to the south of Bethlehem; today the *mogharet* Khareitun. "Lavra of Souka" is its Syriac name; in Greek it was called the Old Lavra.

50. The Brook of Tekoa flowed through the Desert of Tekoa, which formed part of the great Judean desert, to the south of the Lavra of Souka.

passed, and the holy Sabbas heard where those who had left the Lavra were, and that they were suffering great want. Then he loaded many provisions onto the Lavra's horses and asses and set out with them to visit them, desiring on the one hand to appease their anger and on the other to help them in their need. But some of them, seeing the Blessed Sabbas coming towards them, began to say:

"Well, this hypocrite has come here too!"

And they uttered other slanders in anger and fury. But he, without malice, looked upon them with love, spoke a kind word to them, and comforted them with food. Seeing their crowded condition, their need and their disorder, for they were like sheep without a shepherd, he informed the Patriarch of everything and asked him to take care of them. The Patriarch entrusted them to him, giving him a litra of gold[51] for building, and much else that was necessary. Sabbas went to them, stayed with them for five months, built them a church and a bakehouse, and established a new lavra[52]. From the old Lavra he transferred thither one of the experienced fathers, named John, a man of foresight who had the gift of prophecy, and appointed him abbot over them. After this he returned to his own Lavra.

John presided over this new Lavra for seven years and fell asleep in the Lord[53]. Before his death he foretold the future of the new Lavra; he wept and said to those around him:

"Days are coming in which the inhabitants of this place will fall away from the right faith and, in pride, imagine great things of themselves; but their audacity will be destroyed, their greatness will suddenly fall, and they will be cast out."

After John, the abbot was Paul, a Roman by birth; he was very simple of heart and shone with divine virtues, but he presided only six months and, unable to endure the disagreements, fled to Arabia, where

51. *Litra*: a pound, a Byzantine unit of weight equal to 72 zolotniks; in gold it was worth up to 506 rubles.

52. Today Khirbet el-Kuseir, at the confluence of the streams of Mukhta el-Jusc and Wadi Mu'allen. The founding of this monastery dates to 507.

53. This was in 514. According to the account of the writer of the life of Venerable Sabbas the Sanctified, the monk Cyril, this John was a wonderworker. His memory is celebrated on Cheesefare Saturday.

he died in the monastery of Severian[54]. Learning of Paul's flight, Sabbas appointed as abbot of the new Lavra his disciple Agapetus. Agapetus found that some of the brethren held the teaching of Origen[8127]: it was like snake's venom on their lips and like a painful sore beneath the tongue. Foremost among them was a certain Palestinian named Nonnus, who seemed a true Christian and outwardly pious, but inwardly was full of pagan and Jewish false teachings and pernicious heresies: Manichaean[8128], Didymian, Evagrian[8129] and Origenist. Finding such brethren, Agapetus, fearing lest others also be infected with the same heresies, reported them to the Patriarch and, on his counsel, expelled them from the monastery. Five years later Agapetus reposed. After him the abbacy was entrusted to a certain Mamas. Nonnus, however, with his like-minded companions, on hearing of Agapetus' death returned to the new Lavra, but he feared Sabbas and concealed the poison of his heresy. Meanwhile the Venerable Sabbas found a cave ten stadia north of his old Lavra, near Castellion, and was occupied with building there a monastery, which he called the Cave monastery[55]. He was assisted by his means by Marcian, a presbyter of Holy Sion, with his sons Antony and John. This John was afterwards Patriarch of Jerusalem after Elias[56].

On the mountain where the Empress Eudocia built a tower[57], in the eastern wilderness, two monks lived who held the heresy of Nestorius[58]. The Venerable Sabbas grieved greatly over them, that they had departed from the right way, and he bore with great sorrow their close presence near his three monasteries. At this time there appeared to him the following vision: it seemed to him that he was in the church of the Holy Resurrection, in the assembly of the people, among whom he saw

54. Otherwise, the monastery in Variha, or Karparvariha.
55. Now Bir el-Qutyar.
56. He was Patriarch of Jerusalem under the name John III from 517 to 524.
57. This was the highest mountain in the whole eastern desert. Now Muntar.
58. Nestorius, who for a time was Patriarch of Constantinople (428–431), taught that a man, Jesus, was born of the Virgin Mary, and that from the moment of His conception God the Word was joined to Him by His grace and dwelt in Him as in a temple; therefore he called the Most Holy Virgin Christotokos, and not Theotokos. Thus Nestorius divided the divine and human natures in Christ. The heresy of Nestorius was condemned by the Church at the 3rd Ecumenical (Ephesian) Council in 431.

those two Nestorians. When the time of Communion came, all the brethren approached the Divine Mysteries without hindrance and received Communion; but when these two heretics wished to approach the Communion, suddenly there appeared terrible soldiers who drove them away from Communion and expelled them from the church. The Blessed one began to beg the soldiers to leave these two monks in the church with the brethren and to allow them to receive Communion. The soldiers answered:

"It is not permitted that they receive the Divine Mysteries, for they are manifestly Jews and do not confess Christ to be God, nor the Most Pure Virgin Mary to be the Theotokos."

After this vision the Blessed one grieved even more, sorrowing for the perdition of their souls; he laboured much, fasting and praying to God for them, that He would enlighten them with the light of the knowledge of the truth. And he often went to them, teaching and instructing, entreating and exhorting, until at last, by the grace of God, he drew them back into the Orthodox Church of Christ: so did he care for the salvation of human souls. He led them away from that hill and gave them to the monastery of Theodosius, and in their place he gave the hill to one of his disciples, John the Byzantine; there, with the help of God, after some time a monastery was established.

There was in the great Lavra one monk, named James, by birth from Jerusalem, of a bold and proud disposition. He conspired with several monks like himself and, in the absence of the Blessed Sabbas, who at that time was spending the Great Lent in the wilderness in his customary complete silence, left the Lavra and began to build for himself a monastery at the aforementioned lake of Heptastomos, desiring to equal the Venerable Sabbas. When the fathers of the Lavra began to be indignant at this and to hinder his undertaking, he deceived them and said that the holy father had commanded him to do it. Returning from the wilderness and learning of James' conduct, Sabbas went to him and began to persuade him to abandon his plan, saying that no good would come of what arises from boldness and haughtiness; but he did not heed the elder nor obey his words. Then the holy one said to him:

"If you do not obey, take care lest you incur punishment."

With these words he went into his cell. But terror and trembling fell upon James; he fell seriously ill and lay for six months, being almost unable to say a word. Despairing of his life, he ordered that he be carried to the Blessed Sabbas, to ask forgiveness before death. Sabbas, seeing him, addressed him with fatherly instruction, then gave him his hand and raised him from his bed. James rose up healthy, as though he had not been ill at all. Sabbas gave him Communion of the Most Pure Mysteries, then gave him food. James no longer returned to his new construction.

Meanwhile the Patriarch Elias, hearing of what had happened, ordered the destruction of James' building. The holy Sabbas, taking from the Lavra several strong monks, came to a place about five stadia north of the demolished structure, built a chapel and cells around it, and, appointing as superiors there certain monks from the great Lavra, named Paul and Andrew, settled other brothers there as well, and founded on that spot a lavra, naming it the Seven-Mouthed[59].

Returning to the great Lavra, he sent to the brethren in the aforementioned place the Holy Gifts and blessed bread, and he had great care for that place.

After some time, the aforementioned James was assigned the obedience of serving in the guesthouse for pilgrims. Being careless in his service, he once cooked too many beans, more than was needed. So many beans remained from the meal that they would have sufficed with abundance for dinner on the following day as well, but he threw the leftovers out the window into the stream; and he did this not once, but many times. Seeing this, the Venerable Sabbas went down unnoticed to the stream, gathered the beans that had been thrown out, brought them to his cell, and dried them a little in the sun. Some time later, the Venerable one cooked these beans, and, having prepared a dish from them, called James to his cell to dine. At the meal the elder said to James:

59. From the name of the lake Heptastomos, or Seven-mouthed.

"Forgive me, brother, that I have not entertained you as I wished, and perhaps have not pleased you with the dish; I do not know how to cook well."

James said:

"Truly, Father, you have prepared these beans excellently; I have not eaten such a dish for a long time."

The elder answered:

"Believe me, child, these are the very beans which you poured into the stream. Know, then, that whoever cannot prepare a pot of beans in measure, so that nothing is wasted, cannot manage a monastery and govern the brethren. So also the Apostle says: 'For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?' (1 Tim. 3:5)." Hearing this, James was ashamed both of his former love of rule and of his negligent service; he repented and asked forgiveness.

This same James was tempted in his cell by the devil with carnal lust and impure thoughts. The temptation did not cease for a long time, and James could endure it no longer: he took a knife and castrated himself. When a terrible pain arose, he began to call for help the brethren who lived nearby. The brethren came and, seeing what had happened, did what they could to relieve his pain with remedies; and only after a long time could they heal him. The news reached the Venerable Sabbas also, and the elder expelled James from the Lavra, as a terrible criminal, though he had already recovered from the wound. James went to the Venerable Theodosius, told him of his misfortune and of his expulsion, and implored him to intercede for him with the Venerable Sabbas, that he might receive him back into the monastery and into his cell. Theodosius, yielding to his brother's entreaties, went to the blessed Sabbas and interceded for the banished brother. At the request of so great a father and his friend, Sabbas received James, imposing on him the command: not to converse with anyone except the one who served him, not to have fellowship with the brethren, not even to go out of his cell; and, besides this, he excluded him from communion of the Most Pure and Divine Mysteries. Thus James remained in silence, abiding in repentance, shedding many tears before God, until forgiveness was

granted to him from on high, and it was revealed to the blessed Sabbas by Divine revelation that James's sin had been forgiven. Once the Venerable Sabbas saw in a vision a luminous man standing nearby, and a certain corpse which lay at James's feet and for whose resurrection James was praying; and a voice was heard from on high:

"James! Your prayers are heard; touch the corpse, and raise him up."

And when James, in obedience to this command, touched the dead man, the dead man at once rose; and the luminous man said to Sabbas:

"Behold, the dead man has risen; and you, loose the bonds laid upon him who raised him."

Seeing this, Sabbas at once sent for James, removed the penance from him, permitted him to enter the assembly and to receive the Holy Mysteries together with the brethren. Seven days after his forgiveness, James departed to the Lord.

In the great Lavra there were two brothers according to the flesh, named Zann and Benjamin, who lived in unanimity in humble service to God, adorned with Divine virtues. Both of them unanimously asked St. Sabbas to give them that desert cell which he had built for himself at a distance of about fifteen stades from the Lavra toward Livias.[60] Knowing that they were true servants of God, the elder agreed to their request and gave them that cell. Thus they had one desert cell, and in the Lavra their own cell. Beside the desert cell they, by their labours and with the help of their great abba, founded a coenobium; for he supplied them with what was needed for expenses and other necessary things. When the brethren in that place increased, Sabbas, by his care, built a church, consecrated it, and introduced into that coenobium the rules of his other coenobia.

Our Venerable Father Sabbas was like a wondrous tree from which fair branches grow; thus, by the example of his holy life and by his diligent prayers to God, he increased in his Lavra the number of holy fathers and ascetics, and they were holy, as he was, according to the Scripture: "If the root be holy, so are the branches" (Rom. 11:16). Among

60. The present Deir es-Senne, opposite Beit Saur el-Atiqa, on the left side of the road from Jerusalem to the Lavra of Venerable Sabbas the Sanctified.

these holy branches we should commemorate the blessed elder Anthimus, from Bithynia, who passed his life in many monastic labours. At the beginning of his stay in the Lavra he built himself a small cell on the far side of the stream on the east side, opposite the pillar of the Venerable Sabbas, and he remained in it for thirty years. In old age he grew weak, fell ill, and lay on his bed. Seeing him so feeble and sick, the blessed Sabbas wished to take him into one of the cells near the church, so that the brethren could visit him there and attend to him without difficulty; but he asked to be left to die where he had first settled. Thus he was left sick in his cell. One night the Venerable Sabbas, rising to pray before the morning chanting as was his custom, heard some beautiful voices, as though many were singing; he thought they were singing Matins in the church, and he marvelled how they could sing Matins without him and without his usual blessing. But going at once to the church, he found no one there, and its doors were locked; he returned, wondering what voices he had heard, and suddenly heard again the same beautiful singing; and they sang the following: "I went with the multitude, I entered with them into the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise of the festal throng" (Ps. 41:5).

Understanding that these wondrous voices were heard from the side where the cell of the blessed Anthimus was, Sabbas surmised that Anthimus had departed this life. Having at once awakened the sacristan, he ordered the signal board to be struck so that the brethren would gather; taking with him several of the brethren, he went to the elder's cell with candles and incense. Entering inside, they found no one; only the lifeless body of the blessed Anthimus lay there, while his soul, with Angelic singing, had departed to the Lord. They took the honourable body, brought it into the church, and, after the funeral service, buried it with the holy fathers.

A brother from the monastery of Theodosius, a strong man named Aphrodisius,[61] was sent on some business; on the way he grew angry at a mule on which he was carrying wheat, and struck it hard; the mule fell from the blow and died. For this Aphrodisius was expelled from his

61. The commemoration of Venerable Aphrodisius of Palestine is on December 24.

monastery by the Venerable Theodosius. Then he came to the Venerable Sabbas, told him of his deed, and asked for his counsel. The Venerable Sabbas gave him a cell and said:

"Live in your cell, do not move to another cell, do not leave the Lavra, restrain your tongue, moderate the demands of your belly, and you will be saved."

Aphrodisius, accepting this command, did not transgress it in anything, and for thirty years he did not go out of the Lavra; he had nothing of his own, not even any vessel for food or a bed; he slept on the branches of trees, covered with matting, and for food he took the leftovers of boiled, unnourishing vegetables. His nightly weeping disturbed the sleep of those who lived nearby. At last he was granted the gift of foresight, for a week before his death he foreknew the day of his departure. After this he asked Sabbas to release him to the monastery of the blessed Theodosius. The Venerable one sent two brethren with him and bade them say to Theodosius:

"Behold, our common brother Aphrodisius, whom I once received from you as a man, I now send back to you, by the grace of Christ, as an Angel."

Theodosius received him with love, forgave him, and let him go in peace; Aphrodisius returned to St. Sabbas and, after a short illness, fell asleep in the Lord.

The inhabitants of the city of Medaba,[62] which lies on the other side of the Jordan, often came to the Venerable one, drew from him very great spiritual benefit, brought him grain and vegetables to the Lavra, and received his blessing. Among them was an honourable man named Gerontius; he came to the holy city and fell ill. Wishing to go to the Mount of Olives to pray, he fell from his horse, was bruised, and became sicker still, so that he did not hope to remain alive. The Venerable Sabbas anointed him with holy oil and healed him. Once, while dining with Gerontius's son Thomas, Sabbas turned vinegar into good wine when suddenly there was no wine. It also happened that the gourds cooked for the workers turned out bitter; Sabbas made them sweet by

62. Now Madaba in Transjordan.

the sign of the Cross. Once the Venerable one was going from Jericho to the Jordan with his young disciple, and they met many townspeople, among them a beautiful girl. When they had passed by, the elder, wishing to test his disciple, said:

"What sort of girl was that who passed? It seemed to me she was blind in one eye."

The disciple answered:

"No, both her eyes see."

"You are mistaken," said the elder, "the girl has one eye."

But the disciple insisted, saying that her eyes were healthy. The elder asked:

"How did you come to know?"

"I, Father," answered the disciple, "looked attentively at her face, and saw that both her eyes see."

Then the elder said to him:

If you looked so attentively at her face, how could you forget the commandment of Holy Scripture: "Lust not after her beauty in thy heart, [lest thou be caught by thine eyes,] and let her eyelashes not entice thee" (Prov. 6:25)? Know, then, that from now on you will not be with me in the cell, since you do not guard your eyes; and he sent him away to Fastellius as a punishment.

After he had lived there for some time and had learned well enough to watch over his eyes with all diligence and to keep vigil over his thoughts, Sabbas received him again into the Lavra and gave him a cell.

Once, when the Venerable was in the desert called Ruva, a lion with a thorn in its paw met him on the way, and falling at the saint's feet, began to roar and show him its paw, as if asking him to heal it. The saint drew the thorn out of the lion's paw and so eased its pain; after this the lion followed the saint and served him. At that time there was with the elder a disciple named Flaïs, and they had an ass. When Sabbas sent the disciple on some errand, he would order the lion to guard the ass; the lion would take the halter in its teeth and lead the ass to graze, and in the evening, after watering it, would bring it back to the elder. After some days, Flaïs was sent on some errand and, through a demonic delusion, fell into an impure sin; at the same time the lion,

while grazing, devoured the ass. Flaïs understood that the lion had devoured the ass because of his sin, to reprove him, and he was afraid to show himself to the elder. In sorrow he went away to some village, and the elder searched for him a long time; at last he found him, brought him back, and, shutting him in a cell, imposed a penance upon him. He made a heartfelt repentance and, with many tears, was cleansed of his sin, through the prayers of the holy elder, who was greatly concerned for the salvation of human souls.

It is fitting to recall Sabbas's care for the well-being of the Church of God during his journeys on church business to Constantinople; he was sent there for the following reason. The Emperor Anastasius, a heretic, rejected the Fourth Ecumenical Council of the Holy Fathers at Chalcedon[63] and at that time caused a great disturbance in the Church. He expelled Euthymius, Patriarch of Constantinople[64], and was angry with Flavian of Antioch[65] and Elias of Jerusalem, whom he also wished to expel, since they did not approve of his heresy. Wishing to incline the emperor to restore peace to the Church, Elias sent to him the abbots of the Palestinian deserts, among whom was Sabbas, with such a written request:

"We send with prayer to your sovereignty the chosen servants of God, good and faithful desert-dwellers, and with them Sabbas, the head of all the desert and the lamp of all Palestine. And you, O Emperor, having received their labors and zeal, put an end to enmity in the Church and do not allow evil to multiply: we know that you are concerned to please God, who gave you the imperial crown."

The abbots arrived in Constantinople, and when they entered the imperial palace, Sabbas walked behind all the others. The guards standing at the doors, seeing him in poor and patched clothing, took him for a beggar and would not let him enter. The emperor, receiving with honor the fathers who had come to him and reading the patriarch's letter, asked which of them was Sabbas, whom the patriarch

63. At this council the heresy of Eutyches (Monophysitism) was condemned, which acknowledged in Christ one divine nature and affirmed that the human nature in Jesus Christ was, at the hypostatic union, absorbed by the Divine.
64. Euthymius was Patriarch of Constantinople from 490 to 496.
65. Flavian was Patriarch of Antioch from 506 to 512.

praised so highly in his letter? The fathers looked around and said that he had walked with them, but they did not know where he had remained. At once the emperor ordered him to be sought, and he was found with difficulty standing somewhere in a corner and reading the Psalms of David. As he was being led to the emperor, the emperor saw a luminous Angel going before him, and, realizing that Sabbas was a man of God, he honored him by rising from his throne and then ordered everyone to be seated. During a lengthy conversation the blessed Sabbas labored more than all the fathers present, with God-inspired words exhorting the emperor to restore peace to the Church and promising him from God victory over his enemies in return. The fathers who had been sent had little success and were dismissed home, but the Venerable Sabbas remained until he should persuade the emperor and reconcile him with Patriarch Elias. The Venerable spent the winter in Byzantium, often visiting the emperor and speaking with him about Orthodoxy and about the Patriarch of Jerusalem. He was granted unhindered access to the palace; he could come and go when he wished, without any hindrance or questioning on the part of the guards, and during this time he persuaded the emperor not to be angry with the patriarch and to grant peace to the Palestinian churches. Then he returned to Jerusalem, richly endowed by the emperor for the road. He received from the emperor up to two thousand gold coins, which he brought to his own quarters and divided among his monasteries, and a certain portion he sent to the village of Mutalaskon, where he was born, so that a church might be built in his father's house in the name of the holy martyrs Cosmas and Damian.

The blessed Patriarch Elias, having obtained peace for the Palestinian churches and for himself through St. Sabbas, did not live long in tranquility: the heretics did not cease slandering him to the emperor and turning him against the Church of Christ and its pastors, in order to vex them. Therefore the emperor convened a council at Sidon[66], pla-

66. This was at the end of 511. Sidon is the most ancient city of Phoenicia, on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, not far from the Lebanon mountain range, with a fine harbor. Christianity appeared in Sidon very early, and even during the earthly life of Jesus Christ He had many disciples there. Afterwards Sidon was destroyed several times, then rebuilt, and finally fell completely; at present it is known as Saida, with 10,000 inhabitants, mostly Muslims.

cing at its head two bishops who shared the perversity of Eutyches and Dioscorus[67], namely Soterichus, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, and Philoxenus of Hierapolis[68], so that at that council they would anathematize the Council of Chalcedon and depose Flavian and Elias from their thrones. So it came to pass: a lawless council assembled, and the impious, with the emperor's help, drove out the blessed Flavian, Patriarch of Antioch, who would not join their council, and in his place the impious Severus took the throne and caused much harm to the Orthodox, who did not wish to have communion with him. He sent his confession of faith, adopted at the council, also to Elias of Jerusalem[69]; the latter, not accepting the heretical canons, sent them back. Learning of this, the emperor was greatly angered at the blessed Elias and at once ordered Severus's confession of faith to be sent to Jerusalem with several clergy and a considerable detachment of troops, to force the Patriarch of Jerusalem by violence to accept the canons of the Council of Sidon. When they arrived in Jerusalem, a great commotion arose, and the patriarch was in great difficulty. Then the Venerable Sabbas gathered all the monks from his monasteries and, entering the holy city, drove away the servants of Severus who had been sent and the soldiers, and anathematized Severus himself with his fellow-thinkers before everyone. The heretics returned in shame to those who had sent them, recounting the great boldness of the Orthodox and their own disgrace. Then the emperor, in inexpressible wrath, sent to Jerusalem Olympius, eparch[70] of Palestine, with a large army, and commanded him, without any law or trial, by imperial authority, to overthrow Patriarch Elias from the throne. Olympius came with a great military force

67. The representatives and heresiarchs of the Monophysites: Eutyches, abbot and archimandrite of one of the Constantinopolitan monasteries, and Dioscorus, Patriarch of Alexandria from 444 to 451.

68. The most zealous and fanatical followers of Monophysitism, especially Philoxenus, Bishop of Hierapolis, surnamed Xenaias, who by force compelled the local population, through gangs of fanatical monks devoted to him, to accept the Monophysite heresy, during which the Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch was tortured to death.

69. In 513.

70. Governor of the province. The bishops of Palestine enjoyed greater authority in comparison with others and were also called by another name, hegemons (a Greek designation), or procurators (a Roman one).

and at once carried out the imperial command, deposed the patriarch without trial, and sent him into exile at Aila; and in his place he installed John[71], son of the presbyter Marcian, who promised to anathematize the Council of Chalcedon and to have communion with Severus. Learning of this, the blessed Sabbas again, as at first, gathered his spiritual host and, like a commander, went to the holy city, but he no longer found the eparch Olympius there; the latter had done the evil he was commanded and had returned contentedly to the emperor. The blessed man greatly grieved over the exile of the innocent Elias and wept for him. Seeing that the new patriarch John was thinking heretically, Sabbas earnestly urged him not to have communion with Severus, but to defend the Council of Chalcedon and stand for it to the last drop of blood; if he did not do so, he would be cursed by all the desert fathers as a heretic. John was ashamed, and at the same time feared so many God-inspired fathers who had come together with St. Sabbas; he renounced Severus and all his heresy, accepted the Orthodoxy confirmed at the Council of Chalcedon, and the holy fathers were at peace.

Soon it became known to the emperor that the newly ordained Patriarch John rejected the Council of Sidon and accepted the Council of Chalcedon. The emperor was angry with Olympius and deprived him of his rank for having chosen such a patriarch, and in place of Olympius he appointed as eparch of all Palestine a certain Anastasius, and sent him to Jerusalem, so that he would either persuade Patriarch John to communion with Severus or overthrow him from the throne. Anastasius came, and at once seizing the patriarch, cast him into prison. The patriarch asked the eparch to show mercy to him, promising to carry out all his orders, only so that it should not appear that he was carrying out the imperial will under compulsion; and he promised that on the following Sunday, before all the people in church, he would anathematize the Council of Chalcedon, glorify the Council of Sidon, and enter into communion with Severus. The patriarch was released from prison and secretly sent to the venerable fathers Sabbas and Theodosius, asking them to gather all the fathers and come to him in church on the

71. He was Patriarch under the name John III from 517 to 524.

Lord's day. It happened that at that time Hypatius, a relative of the emperor, was in Jerusalem on pilgrimage; on the Lord's day both abbots came, Sabbas and Theodosius, and with them up to ten thousand black-robed monks[72]. In the church[73], to which came both the eparch Anastasius and Hypatius, the emperor's relative, with his soldiers, and a multitude of people assembled, the patriarch entered the ambo together with Sabbas and Theodosius; then all the people with the monks cried out to the patriarch:

"Anathematize the heretics and confirm the Council of Chalcedon!"

The patriarch took courage and said in a loud voice:

"Whoever thinks in agreement with Eutyches, Nestorius, Severus and Soterichus, let him be anathema!"

Likewise the blessed Theodosius together with the Venerable Sabbas cried out loudly:

"Whoever does not accept the four councils as the four Evangelists, let him be accursed!"

Seeing this, the eparch Anastasius took fright at the multitude of black-robed monks and of the people, hastily left the church, and fled to Caesarea. The kinsman of the Emperor, for his part, swore to the Fathers that he had come not to uphold the teaching of Severus, but to venerate the holy places and to join the Holy Catholic Church. He gave the Venerable Fathers Sabbas and Theodosius a great quantity of gold, that they might distribute it among the monks who had come with them. After this, the Venerable Fathers, on behalf of the whole council, wrote to the Emperor as follows: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal King of all and God, in His goodness has given into your hands the sceptres of the earthly kingdom, that through you He might bestow the true blessings of the world upon all churches, and especially upon the mother of churches, holy Sion. All know that in this church the great mystery of the right faith began and spread to the ends of the earth. We, the inhabitants of these Divine places, received it from the holy

72. This was at the beginning of 517.

73. In the church of the holy protomartyr and archdeacon Stephen, north of the present Damascus Gate. This church was chosen for the occasion by the archbishop because of its spaciousness, since the cathedral church could not hold the multitude that had gathered.

Apostles, have kept it whole and unharmed until this day, and by Christ's grace shall keep it forever, not allowing our opponents to turn us from the right path, nor yielding to their foul and vain words. In this immaculate and unbroken faith you too, O Emperor, were brought up and grew; and we marvel now how, in the days of your reign, in the holy city of Jerusalem, there has arisen such a tumult and such an upheaval that they have not spared even the servants of God, the presbyters and monks, who from their youth have loved virtue and chosen for themselves a meek life in silence. Before the eyes of the Jews and other unbelievers, they are dragged from holy Sion itself through the city streets and driven out into barren places. They are even compelled to do things unbefitting the right faith, so that those who come here for prayer, instead of profit to their souls, receive harm and return in scandal. We therefore beseech your sovereignty: deliver us from so many evils, the author of which is Severus, to whom, for our sins, the Church of Antioch has been given over, to the perdition of his own soul and to the scandal of all churches. How can we, the Jerusalemites, now be taught the faith without scandal? As if we, who have been fathers and teachers to all in the word of piety, had only now, so late, come to know the right confession! Do we not know that the newly devised, supposed correction of the right and sound faith bequeathed by the Fathers is not a correction at all, but a corruption and a ruin, and prepares perdition of soul as the reward of those who accept it? We will not endure any addition to the confession of faith beyond what was established by the three hundred and eighteen holy Fathers of Nicaea and by the three other Ecumenical Councils that came after[74], nor any change; we are ready to lay down our souls for this, and to endure, if it were possible, countless deaths. May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding[75], preserve our holy faith and calm the storm raised against it, to His holy glory and to the adornment of your own kingdom."

Having received such a letter from the holy Fathers, the Emperor was greatly angered and resolved to banish from the bounds of Jerus-

74. The reference is to the Ecumenical Councils: the 1st (Nicene) in 325, the 2nd (Constantinopolitan) in 381, the 3rd (Ephesian) in 431, and the 4th (Chalcedonian) in 461.
75. An expression of the Apostle. See Phil. 4.

alem the Patriarch John together with both hegumens, Sabbas and Theodosius. But the providence of God did not permit this wicked deed to be accomplished. At that time there happened to be a war with certain barbarians, and therefore the Emperor deferred for a time his persecution of the Church and of the Venerable Fathers, and began to prepare for war against the barbarians.

After the unjust banishment of the holy Patriarch Elias, by the righteous judgment of God there came famine, drought, and great failure of harvest throughout all Palestine, as in the days of the Prophet Elijah (3 Kgdms. 17; Jas. 5:17–18): heaven was shut and gave no rain, and the springs of water dried up. Moreover, locusts appeared in multitudes, covered the whole earth, and destroyed all the grass in the fields and the leaves on the trees. Such a chastisement of God continued for up to five years, and many died of hunger and thirst. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem said that God was punishing Palestine with famine for the unjust banishment of Patriarch Elias. At that time the blessed Sabbas gathered the superiors of the seven monasteries he had built, and bade them not to be concerned about any bodily thing, recalling to them the words of the Gospel: "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mt. 6:31–33).

And they were nourished by the almighty providence of God.

Once, on the eve of the Sunday, the economos of the great Lavra said to the Venerable Father:

"It is not possible, Father, to strike the semantron this Saturday and Sunday for the Divine Service, for not only is there nothing to set before the Fathers to eat when they gather, but there is not even bread to be found for the holy oblation: so impoverished are we."

The holy man answered:

"I will not give up the service because of a lack of food. He is righteous who bade us take no thought for the morrow, and He is able to sustain us in time of famine. Let the churchwarden send to the city to

sell a vessel or a garment, and buy what is needful for the Divine Liturgy."

So the holy man answered the economos, and, placing his hope in God, he waited. And even before the Sunday had come, suddenly some youths arrived, sent by the providence of God, leading with them thirty asses laden with bread, wheat, wine and oil, and various other provisions, and they gave all this to the Venerable Father. He gave thanks to God and said to the economos:

"What do you say, brother? Ought we not to forbid the striking of the semantron this Saturday and Sunday, since there is nothing to set before the Fathers who gather?"

The economos marveled at the great faith of the holy man and at the great providence of God over them, and asked forgiveness for his own unbelief.

After this the Venerable Father wished to visit the most holy Patriarch of Jerusalem, Elias, in his exile; Sabbas was then eighty years old[76]. He took with him two hegumens, Stephen and Euphalius, and set out. Seeing Sabbas and those who had come with him, Elias rejoiced and kept them with him for several days. All those days he came out of his cell at the ninth hour[77], for from the dismissal of Vespers until the ninth hour he showed himself to no one, but, closing his doors, remained in silence; and at the ninth hour he came out to them, dined with them, and delighted in spiritual conversation; after the evening dismissal he again withdrew into his silent cell. Once, on the ninth of July, he did not come out to them as usual. They waited for him the whole day and did not take food. At the sixth hour of the night[78] the Patriarch came out with tear-stained eyes and said to them:

"You eat; as for me, I have no time, I am occupied with one matter."

To their anxious question, why he had been so long in coming and why he was weeping so, he, heaving a deep sigh and weeping, said to the holy Sabbas:

76. This was in 518.
77. By the Hebrew reckoning, which remained also in Christian liturgical practice, the ninth hour corresponded to three o'clock in the afternoon.
78. At the twelfth.

"Blessed Father, alas, Emperor Anastasius has just died; in ten days it behooves me too to leave this life and to be judged with him before the dread Judgment of God."

So it came to pass: in ten days the most holy Patriarch Elias reposed[79], having been a little ill before his end. The Venerable Sabbas buried him with honor and returned to his Lavra. Concerning the death of the Emperor Anastasius it is related that on the night when the appearance concerning him came to Patriarch Elias, thunder rolled and lightning struck the imperial palace; it drove the Emperor from place to place, from one corner to another, and at last overtook him in a corner and killed him. Thus the wicked man perished by an evil death.

After the death of the impious Emperor Anastasius, the pious Justin[80] ascended the throne and sent throughout all the regions of his kingdom a decree that the Orthodox who had been banished should be recalled, that each of them should receive back his rank and his place, that the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon should be inscribed in the holy books, and that peace should reign in the Church of Christ. When this imperial decree reached the holy city of Jerusalem, all rejoiced greatly, and the Patriarch John asked the Venerable Sabbas to go to Caesarea and Scythopolis[81], to proclaim this imperial letter and to inscribe the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon in the church books. Although the Venerable Father was already bodily weak from old age and worn down by many monastic labors, yet, for the sake of the Church of Christ, he did not refuse to fulfill this charge; he did not shrink from undertaking so difficult a journey, but set out together with some other senior monks, and was received in Caesarea by St. John the Chozebite, who was then bishop there. In Scythopolis the Venerable Father was honorably received by the metropolitan Theodosius and by all the cit-

79. July 20, 517.

80. Justin was Byzantine emperor from 518 to 527. When the said decree of Justin was brought to Jerusalem, a countless multitude of monks and laymen assembled, St. Sabbas also arrived, and many bishops; and on August 6, the feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, the decisions of the four (Ecumenical) councils, as the writer of the life of St. Sabbas the Sanctified remarks, were entered among the sacred decrees. "Thus," the writer of the life concludes, "the prophecy of the Divine elder was fulfilled upon the emperor Anastasius."

81. Here Caesarea of Palestine is meant.

izens, and he worked miracles there. He prophesied concerning a certain distinguished Samaritan, Silvanus, who rose up against the Christians, that he would be burned by fire in the midst of the city, of which more will be said below; he healed a woman with an issue of blood and a demon-possessed maiden; and having thus brought much profit to the Church, he returned to Jerusalem.

When the aforesaid decree of Justin had been brought to Jerusalem, there gathered an innumerable multitude of monks and laymen; the holy Sabbas also arrived, and many bishops. And on the 6th of August, on the feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, the decrees of the four (Ecumenical) Councils, as the writer of the Life of the Venerable Sabbas the Sanctified observes, were inscribed among the sacred ordinances. "Thus," the writer of the Life concludes, "the prophecy of the Divine elder was fulfilled upon the Emperor Anastasius."

Towards the end of the fourth year without rain in Palestine, when there was a great shortage of water, the brethren wished to disperse and asked the Saint to dismiss them. Reproaching them for their impatience, the Saint bade them hope in God, and on the third day a raincloud appeared above the Lavra; rain fell, and the Lavra's ditches were filled with water. This rain fell only upon the Lavra, and in the surrounding places there was not a drop of dew. Then the hegumens of the neighboring monasteries came to the elder and said:

"Wherein have we sinned against you, Father, that you have forgotten us and begged rain from God for your Lavra alone?"

He comforted and encouraged them kindly, assuring them that the water in their monasteries would not fail until God gave rain to all Palestine. The fifth year of famine came; water was so scarce that in the Holy City the beggars were dying of thirst. Through drought and lack of rain the springs had dried up, the wells, ponds and streams had gone dry. Patriarch John grieved bitterly, and visiting those places which had once been marshy and wet, he commanded that ditches and wells be dug to find water, but no water was found. At the site of the Siloam spring, many workers with great difficulty dug down forty sazhens and found no water; the Patriarch, in despair, mourned the common calamity of the whole city. It was the month of September,

and the **Feast of the Renewal** was drawing near. Learning that the Venerable Sabbas had by his prayer brought rain upon the Lavra, the Patriarch sent for him and asked him to pray to God that He would have mercy on His people and not destroy them by hunger and thirst. The Venerable Sabbas, however, refused, saying:

"Who am I, that I should turn away the wrath of God? I myself am a sinner."

The Patriarch implored him all the more. Then the Venerable said:

"For the sake of obedience I will go to my cell and pray God for mercy; if three days pass and there is no rain, know that God has not heard me. Pray also yourselves, that my prayer may reach God."

With these words he departed. The next morning there was terrible heat; a multitude of workers dug all day in the aforementioned ditch, and in the evening they left all their vessels and baskets there, intending to come back to work in the morning. Night came, and a wind blew from the south; a storm broke out and all night a downpour fell, so that the gutters filled and streams flowed from every side. Into the place where they had been digging water poured, and the earth which had been removed from the ditch with such labor and over so long a time at once slid back into its place, covering the vessels and baskets, and that place was made level with the ground, so that it could not be told where they had been digging. All the reservoirs of the Holy City, by the prayers of the Venerable Sabbas, were filled with water, and all gave thanks to God with joy.

In the eighty-sixth year of the life of the Venerable Sabbas, Patriarch John reposed, leaving as his successor a virtuous man, Peter Eleutheropolitan[82]. Then, three years later, Emperor Justin, because of old age and sickness, left the throne, entrusting the realm to his nephew Justinian[83]. Patriarch Peter loved and honored the Venerable Sab-

82. The Patriarch of Jerusalem John died in 524. His successor, Patriarch Peter, held the patriarchate from 524 to 544. Eleutheropolitan: he is so named after his homeland, the city of Eleutheropolis in southern Palestine.

83. Justin, during his lifetime, on account of his old age and bodily weakness, with the consent of the whole Senate, raised his nephew Justinian to the imperial throne at the latter's coronation by Epiphanius, Patriarch of Constantinople; Justinian had already been managing affairs of state. Justinian reigned from 527 to 565.

bas as the earlier patriarchs had done, and often visited him in the desert. The Patriarch had a sister named Hesychia, a pious and virtuous woman. She fell into a grievous illness, so that the physicians despaired of curing her. Then the Patriarch asked St. Sabbas to come to the sick woman's house and pray for her. He came and made the sign of the Cross over the sick woman three times, and she at once arose, glorifying God.

At the beginning of the ninety-first year of the life of the Venerable Sabbas, St. Abba Theodosius[84] reposed. At this time the Samaritans[85] who lived in Palestine broke away from the authority of the Greek emperor, chose for themselves a king from their own tribe named Julian, rose up against the Christians and caused much evil: they seized many churches and burned them, attacked villages and cities, and slew a multitude of Christians, especially in the district of Neapolis[86], where they seized the local bishop Samon and killed him with the sword, and cut the presbyters who were with him into pieces, and, mixing them with the relics of the holy martyrs, burned them. Learning of this, the emperor sent a great army against the Samaritans, and the Samaritan king Julian was slain in battle; at that same time Silvanus, whose destruction the Venerable Sabbas had foretold, was taken captive by the Christians and burned at Scythopolis in the middle of the city. His son Arsenius went to Constantinople and soon, by some means unknown, gained the emperor's favor, was held in great honor at court, and, having won the emperor's confidence, began to slander and bring false accusations against the Christians of Palestine (he himself held to the Samaritan impiety), claiming that they were guilty of the Samaritans' uprising and of their revolt from obedience to the emperor. The emper-

84. In 529, January 12.

85. The Samaritans were the inhabitants of Samaria, the central region of Palestine, west of the Jordan, who received their name from the capital city of Samaria. The Samaritans formed a sect hostile to the Jews, which acknowledged from the sacred books only the Pentateuch of Moses as the true divine Revelation, rejected all the other books of Scripture and the Jewish traditions, and affirmed certain erroneous opinions about the Messiah, about the Angels, about the resurrection of the dead and the future life, and so forth.

86. Neapolis, now Nablus, ancient Shechem, a city in the valley between Mount Gerizim, where the Samaritan temple stood, and Mount Ebal, in a region that remains beautifully flourishing to this day.

or believed the calumny of the Samaritan Arsenius and was angered against the Palestinians. Learning of this, Peter, Patriarch of Jerusalem, and the bishops under him asked the Blessed Sabbas to take upon himself the labor of going to Constantinople, to soften the emperor's anger and to petition him concerning many church and civil needs. The Venerable Sabbas, though he was already very old, nevertheless hastened to set out, placing the needs of the Church above his own rest. Learning of his arrival, the pious Emperor Justinian and the Patriarch of Constantinople Epiphanius[87] sent distinguished persons to meet him. When he entered to the emperor, God opened the eyes of Emperor Justinian, as once those of Anastasius: and he saw the grace of God shining brightly above the head of the Venerable Sabbas, emitting rays of sunlight and encircling his head as with a crown. Frightened, he rose from the throne and with a bow asked for a blessing; then, taking the Venerable by the head, he kissed him with love and joy, and asked the elder to grant his blessing to himself and to his empress Theodora as well. When the empress saw the Venerable Sabbas, she bowed to him and said:

"Pray for me, Father, that I may have children."

The elder said:

"May God, the Lord of all, preserve your kingdom."

The empress again said:

"Pray, Father, to God, that He may loose my barrenness and grant me to bear a son."

The elder again said:

"May the God of glory preserve your kingdom in orthodoxy and grant you victory over your enemies."

For the third time the empress asked the elder to loose her barrenness, and heard the same answer as before, and was troubled. When the Venerable left the empress, the fathers who were with him asked him:

"Why, Father, have you grieved the empress and not consented to pray for her?"

87. St. Epiphanius was Patriarch of Constantinople from 520 to 535. His memory is August 25.

The elder answered them:

"Believe me, fathers, no fruit will come from her womb, lest it be nourished by the teaching of Severus and again trouble the Church of Christ more than Anastasius did."

By these words the Venerable made it clear that the empress secretly held to heresy. The emperor heeded the Venerable's request, transferred his anger from the Palestinian Christians to the Samaritans, and issued a decree that the Samaritans should not hold assemblies, that their children should be deprived of inheritance from their parents, and finally that the instigators of their uprising should be put to death. Then Arsenius the Samaritan also went into hiding, since the emperor had ordered him executed; afterwards he fled to St. Sabbas, fell at his feet and asked for holy baptism, so as thereby to escape the emperor's wrath and avoid death; and he himself and all his household were baptized.

The emperor, wishing to show his favor and to please the Venerable Sabbas, bade him ask of him whatever he needed and take as much gold as he wished for the needs of his monasteries. The Venerable, desiring no riches for himself but the benefit of the Christians, persuaded the emperor to remit the taxes levied for the throne in Palestine, since the people were ruined by the Samaritan war; to restore at the imperial expense the churches burned by the Samaritans; to build in the Holy City a hospice to shelter Christians coming from afar to worship at the Tomb of the Lord; to erect there also a hospital for travelers and assign physicians to them; to complete the building of the church of the Most Holy Theotokos founded by Patriarch Elias; to found a city in the desert below his monasteries and station garrison troops there for defense against barbarian invasion; but above all he asked the emperor to take pains to root out in his realm the heresies of Arius, Nestorius and Origen and other heretics who trouble the Church of God—and for all this he promised the emperor that from God would come the reunion to the Greek kingdom of Rome and Africa, the lands which former emperors had lost. The emperor agreed to all this and commanded that the saint's request be fulfilled, taking care himself that the Venerable's desire be carried out in everything as quickly as possible. While the em-

peror was discussing the saint's request with his counselors and treasurers, the Venerable, withdrawing a little, began to read the Psalms of David, performing the third hour. And one of his disciples, named Jeremiah, approached him and said:

"Venerable Father, why have you withdrawn from the emperor, when he is taking such pains to fulfill your request, and stand apart?"

The elder said to him:

"Child, they are doing their work, and we are doing ours."

After this the emperor gave the saint a written certificate and dismissed him in peace. God rewarded the emperor a thousandfold for the kindness shown to the Blessed Sabbas and for the fulfillment of his request. The elder's prophecy came to pass: after some time the emperor did indeed win two glorious victories over his enemies, acquired Rome and Africa, and saw both kings—Witiges of Rome[88] and Gelimer of Carthage[89]—brought to Constantinople as captives. The Venerable Sabbas returned to Jerusalem, and at the request of the patriarch and bishops set out again for Caesarea and Scythopolis to proclaim the imperial decree[90]; there he saw the little boy Cyril (the compiler of this Life), named him his disciple, and foretold that he would become a monk in his Lavra.

Soon after returning from there, Sabbas fell ill. Learning of this, Patriarch Peter came to visit him and, seeing that the old man had nothing in his cell, not even what was necessary in his illness, apart from a small quantity of carob pods and old dates, he took him and carried him on a litter to his episcopal residence, and himself cared for him, serving him with his own hands. After some days, the Venerable

88. Witiges was one of the last kings of the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy, founded by Theodoric the Great in 493. Witiges reigned from 537 to 538. The Ostrogothic kingdom was conquered by the famous commanders of the Byzantine emperor Justinian, Belisarius and finally Narses, in 564.

89. Gelimer was the last king of the Vandal kingdom in North Africa, on the site of ancient Carthage. The Vandal kingdom was destroyed and conquered by the Byzantine commander Virdizarius in 531. Taken prisoner, Gelimer was sent to Constantinople, where he accompanied Belisarius in his triumphal procession.

90. The imperial decree concerned chiefly the abolition of the Arian, Monophysite, Nestorian and Origenist heresies and the Samaritan false teachings, and the establishment of Orthodoxy.

Sabbas had a certain Divine vision, announcing to him his imminent repose.

He told the Patriarch of what he had seen and asked to be released to the Lavra, that he might die in his own cell. The Patriarch, earnestly desiring to comply with him in every way, sent him back to his cell with everything necessary for the comfort of the sick man. The old man lay down in his cell, summoned all the fathers and brethren, took leave of them for the last time, and appointed in his place as hegumen a worthy man named Melitas, charging him to keep inviolate all the traditions of the monastery. For four days he ate nothing and spoke with no one. On Saturday evening he asked for the Most Pure Mysteries, and, having communed, uttered his last word:

"Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!"

Thus he reposed on the fifth of December, having lived ninety-four years, and passed into the life that does not grow old, accompanied by the Angels of God and the holy martyrs.[91]

The news of the Venerable one's repose spread through all the regions of Jerusalem, and from every lavra and monastery there gathered an innumerable multitude of monks; the Patriarch came too, with bishops and civil authorities. Having performed the funeral service, they buried his body with honor between the two churches, in the place where the Venerable one had once seen a pillar of fire.[92] How his holy soul was escorted to heaven by Angels and martyrs became known from the following. There lived in the holy city an artisan in silverwork, a native of Damascus, named Romulus, the first of the deacons serving at the holy Gethsemane; he himself related how, at the time of the re-

91. Venerable Sabbas the Sanctified reposed in the year 532.

92. Concerning the relics of Venerable Sabbas, the writer of his Life, the monk Cyril, wrote a long time afterwards: "His body remains to this day in the tomb, whole and incorrupt. I myself saw this with my own eyes in the past indiction. When the precious tomb was opened in order to lay in it the remains of the blessed Cassian, I went down into it to venerate the relics of the Divine Elder, and I saw that they were whole and incorrupt." The relics of Venerable Sabbas were seen as if alive in his Lavra by the Russian pilgrim, Hegumen Daniel, at the beginning of the 7th(?) century. His monastery still stands by the stream of Kidron, about 13 versts east of Jerusalem, and enjoys wide renown in the East and the glory of the strict, ascetic life of its monks. Afterwards the relics of Venerable Sabbas were transferred by the Latins to Venice, where they now rest in the Church of St. Mark.

pose of the Venerable Father Sabbas, thieves dug under his house and stole much silver, both his own and that of others entrusted to him, up to a hundred litras.[93] In grievous sorrow Romulus came to the church of the holy martyr Theodore and for five days wept and lit a candle before the sanctuary. On the fifth night he fell asleep and saw the holy martyr Theodore, who asked him:

"What is the matter with you, brother? Why do you grieve and weep so?"

He answered:

"My silver has been lost, both mine and others', thieves have robbed me, and therefore I weep and grieve and pray, but without success; you have not heard me."

The saint said:

"Believe me, brother, I was not here these days; we, all the martyrs, were commanded to gather to meet the holy soul of the Venerable Sabbas, departed from the body, and escort it to its place of rest; but now do not weep, go to such-and-such a place" (he named the place) "and you will find what was stolen."

Romulus at once arose, took some of his acquaintances, went with them to the indicated place, and found everything just as the holy Theodore had said in the vision.

Nor may we pass over certain other miracles that occurred after the repose of the Venerable one. Two hospitable brothers had a vineyard and often gave shelter to the brethren who came to them from the Lavra of the Blessed Sabbas; they fell ill with some grievous sickness just at the time of the grape harvest, so that they despaired of gathering the wine and of remaining alive. They believed in the heavenly intercession of the Venerable Sabbas and often remembered him, calling upon him for help; and the saint soon heard their prayer, appeared to each of them separately, and said:

"I have prayed to God for your health, and He has granted you according to your petition; rise and go to your work."

93. The litra, a Byzantine unit of weight equal to 72 zolotniks, cost up to 42 rubles in silver; thus a hundred litras of silver equalled slightly more than a thousand rubles.

Coming to themselves, they felt themselves healthy, glorified God, and gave thanks to the saint. From that time on, every year, on the day when this miracle took place, they kept a great feast.

A certain pious and virtuous woman, named Ginara, promised to donate two veils for the adornment of the churches in Castellion and in the cave; but because the weaver was slothful, those veils were long in being finished. Ginara was much grieved by this. Then the Venerable Sabbas appeared to her and said:

"Do not grieve; tomorrow the work will go forward successfully, for your offering will be pleasing."

He also appeared to the weaver and reproached her with anger for her laziness. In the morning each told the other what she had seen, and the work was soon finished.

The steward of the great Lavra hired Saracen camels to carry wheat purchased from the Dead Sea. When the camels came to the Lavra with the wheat, one of them left the road to the right, fell from the bank with its load into a stream, and lay in the mud. The camel's owner, a Saracen, cried out:

"Father Sabbas, help, and do not let my camel perish!"

And at once, in a single moment, he saw the honorable old man sitting upon the camel; he ran by another way, went down into the stream, and found his camel unharmed, but he no longer saw the one sitting upon it. The wheat too was found intact. From that time on, every year this Saracen came to the Lavra to venerate the tomb of the Venerable Sabbas.

Once, the followers of Origen, gathering from various places under the leadership of a certain Leontius, intended to fall suddenly upon the great Lavra, scatter the orthodox flock of the Venerable Sabbas, and utterly destroy the Lavra down to its foundations. Having prepared for this a multitude of crowbars and other iron implements, as well as weapons, they went forth in a great host in violent fury. It was the second hour of the day when suddenly darkness and fog came upon them on the way; they wandered the whole day and did not find the Lavra, but strayed into impassable places, where night overtook them; with difficulty, on the following day, they found themselves near the

monastery of St. Marcian.[94] Perceiving that they would accomplish nothing, they dispersed each to his own place in shame; and the words of the prophet Isaiah were fulfilled upon them: "Destruction and ruin are in their ways... we grope for the wall like the blind, and we walk as if we had no eyes; we stumble at noonday" (Is. 59:7, 10). God, however, preserved the Lavra for the sake of His servant, the Venerable Sabbas, who had labored gloriously in it. By his holy prayers may the most merciful, one God in Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, keep us also from all evils, to Whom be glory forever, amen.[95]

Kontakion, Tone 8:

"From infancy thou didst offer thyself to God as a pure sacrifice through virtue, blessed Sabbas, having become a cultivator of piety; therefore thou wast an adornment of the venerable, and a praiseworthy citizen of the desert. Wherefore we cry to thee: Rejoice, Sabbas most rich!"

* * *

Memory of the Venerable Carion the Monk and his son Zacharias

Память преподобных Кариона монаха и сына его Захарии

There lived in Egypt[96] a man named Carion. He had two children, whom he left to his wife, while he himself went off to a skete[97] and became a monk. After some time a famine arose in Egypt; Carion's wife, having endured poverty, went to the skete carrying her children, one a boy named Zacharias, the other a girl, and sat down be-

94. The coenobium of St. Abba Marcian was located near Bethlehem.

95. Venerable Sabbas the Sanctified wrote the first Typikon of the Church services, known under the name of the Jerusalem Typikon, and adopted by all the Palestinian monasteries. According to the testimony of Symeon of Thessalonica, "our Divine Father Sabbas set forth the Typikon, having received it from the Venerable Euthymius and Theoctistus (who were the first teachers of Sabbas in the ascetic life of the desert), and they received it from those who were before them, and from the Confessor Chariton," who reposed in 270, that is, more closely according to Apostolic tradition. Afterwards the Typikon of Sabbas the Sanctified was enriched with many necessary and important additions, in accordance with the demands of piety; still later it was lost and was restored by Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

96. Egypt is a northeastern country of Africa, along the river Nile.

neath a tree on the bank of a spring. In the skete there was a custom: if any woman came to converse with a monk, they were to talk from a distance, across the river. And this woman said to Carion across the river:

"Here you are, a monk, and now there is a great famine: who will feed your children?"

Carion said to his wife:

"Take the female child for yourself and go away, and let the boy remain with me."

And Carion took the child Zacharias for himself and raised him in the skete, and everyone knew that he was his son. When the youth grew up, dissatisfaction arose among the monks on his account. Hearing of this, Carion said to Zacharias:

"Arise and go away from here, for the fathers murmur against me because of you."

Zacharias answered:

"I am your son; where shall I go from you?"

Then the two of them, Father Carion and his son, went off to the Thebaid,[98] and lived for some days in a cell there. But there too murmuring arose, and they returned again to the skete, although the brethren here also did not cease murmuring. Then Zacharias went to a lake of poisonous water, immersed himself in the water up to his nostrils, and remained so for an hour; after this he became like a leper, and his father could scarcely recognize him. When he came to receive the Holy Communion, the holy presbyter Isidore had a revelation concerning Zacharias, and said to him:

"Child, last Sunday you came to communion as a man, and now you come as an Angel."

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97. *Skete* – an Egyptian word meaning scales, the testing of the heart. Others derive it from the Greek *skitos*, skin, which derivation indicates that the first skete-dwelling ascetics had no properly built houses, but were content to make shelters of the skins of wild beasts. "Skete" was the name of a particular kind of monastic community, in the sense of separate cells for solitary hermits. This name was applied first of all to a known locality, at a distance of 25–30 versts from Mount Nitria, in the northwestern part of Egypt.

98. The Thebaid is the region of the famous ancient Egyptian city of Thebes; by the name of its principal city this name was also applied to all of Upper (southern) Egypt. The Thebaid desert was one of the most favoured places of ascetic life for the early Christian monks,

When Carion was preparing to depart to God, he said to the brethren:

"I have accomplished many labors, struggling more than my son Zacharias, but I have not attained to such a degree of humility and silence as he has."

And the old man reposed. After this, Father Moses said to Zacharias:

"Tell me then, what must I do to be saved?"

Zacharias threw himself at his feet, saying:

"Is it for me to ask you, Father?"

But the old man said to him:

"Believe me, child Zacharias, I have seen the Holy Spirit descend upon you, therefore I asked you."

Then Zacharias took the hood from his head, laid it at his feet, trampled it, and said:

"If a man is not ground down in this way, he cannot be a monk."

When Zacharias was preparing to depart, Moses asked him:

"What do you see, brother?"

He answered:

"Would it not be better to be silent, Father?"

Then Moses said:

"Yes, child, be silent."

At the very hour of his death, Father Isidore, looking up to heaven, said:

"Rejoice, my child Zacharias; the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven are opened to you!"

And then Zacharias committed his soul to God,[99] and was buried by the honorable fathers in the skete.

* * *

NOTES

8116. During the spread of the Monophysite heresy (in the second half of the 5th century), which asserted that in Jesus Christ there was secretly one divine nature, which

99. Venerable Zachariah reposed at the end of the 4th century A.D.

swallowed up human nature, a certain Peter the Fuller, also called Cnaphaeus, which means "cloth-fuller", since in his youth he had practiced this trade (*fullo* is the Latin name for a fuller, and *knaphus* the Greek), while still a presbyter (later he was the false Patriarch of Antioch), added to the "Thrice-Holy" ("Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us") the words "who wast crucified for us". Since he was a Monothelite (that is, he acknowledged in Christ not two but one divine will), by this addition he wished to express that in the sufferings of the Savior not only His Divinity suffered, but even the whole Holy Trinity. Peter's followers formed a separate sect of the Theopaschites, which greatly troubled the Orthodox world. Later this addition, to the scandal of the Orthodox of the Eastern Church, through misunderstanding and misapprehension of Greek terms and turns of phrase, penetrated into the Armenian Church, which remained faithful to Orthodoxy, and it is still used in its services.

8127. In his writings Origen held certain non-Orthodox opinions, though he did not put them forward as unshakable truths; but the most extreme followers of his teaching, persistently preaching and spreading them, confused the Orthodox and stirred up the Church of Christ. Thus Origen thought wrongly about Christ: developing the non-Orthodox teaching on the pre-existence of souls and supposing that God created a fixed number of spiritual beings of equal dignity, he further asserted that one of these created spirits was drawn toward the Godhead with such fervent love that it became inseparably united with the Divine Word and became its created bearer; and that this, supposedly, is the human soul through which God the Word could become incarnate on earth, since the direct incarnation of the Godhead was, supposedly, inconceivable. Further, Origen understood the death of Christ on the Cross in a non-Orthodox sense as well, representing it as something spiritually repeated in the spiritual world and having an effect there in the liberation of the Angels, and attributing too much in the work of salvation to the action of the ordinary powers with which our nature is endowed. Origen also thought wrongly on several points of his teaching about the resurrection and the future life, for example, that the devil can be saved; and in his interpretation of Holy Scripture he understood far too much in a mystical, mysterious sense, thereby destroying the true historical meaning of Scripture.

8128. Manichaeism was a heresy that arose in Persia under the influence of an attempt to unite Christianity with the principles of the Persian religion of Zoroaster, which preached dualism, that is, the existence from eternity of two independent principles or kingdoms, the good and the evil. The founder of Manichaeism, Manes (who lived in the 3rd century), was at first a pagan magus, then, having accepted Christianity, even became a presbyter, but was soon excommunicated from the Church for his inclination toward the pagan Persian religion. According to his teaching, Christ is only a luminous aeon (spirit) proceeding from the Father of light by emanation; one half of Him was absorbed by matter and formed the soul of the visible world, the so-called suffering Jesus, while the second half, with the help of another aeon, the Living Spirit, was freed from matter and placed in the sun; this is the so-called impassible Jesus. The incarnation of Christ, according to the Manichaean teaching, is the descent from the sun of the impassible Jesus to liberate the suffering Jesus, whose luminous particles Satan had, supposedly, gathered and, for greater convenience in possessing them, enclosed in the per-

son of a man. According to this teaching, the incarnation of Christ was only apparent (docetism). In its moral aspect it preached a struggle against matter, for the liberation of light from it, through the gradual mortification of the flesh within oneself. The heresy of the Manichaeans was especially widespread in the 4th and 5th centuries.

8129. Didymus and Evagrius were not properly heretics, although in their teaching they held to certain non-Orthodox opinions.

Didymus, the ancient and most remarkable theologian of the 4th century, despite his blindness was one of the greatest scholars of his time and for more than 50 years headed the famous Alexandrian catechetical school. In his knowledge of grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, geography, astronomy, Holy Scripture and Theology he was a marvel of the age. At the same time he was a strict ascetic. Didymus struggled against the Arians and the Manichaeans. But he was a zealous follower of Origen, for which he incurred reproaches; in this he held to some of Origen's non-Orthodox opinions.

Evagrius was a disciple of Didymus the Blind, a deacon under St. Gregory the Theologian, later an Egyptian ascetic and hermit. He was a man of great learning and severity; in his monastic labors he wrote much that was useful, chiefly ascetical works; but he lost much in the esteem of many on account of his regard for Origen.



THE SIXTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 6

6 декабря

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

Life of St. Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra, Wonderworker

Житие святителя и чудотворца Николая, архиепископа Мирликийского

The land of Lycia nurtured the Hierarch of Christ, Nicholas, the great Wonderworker, the swift helper and the excellent intercessor before God. He was born in the city of Patara.[1] His parents, Theophanes and Nonna, were pious, noble and wealthy people. This blessed couple, for their God-pleasing life, their many alms and great virtues, were deemed worthy to bring forth a holy branch, "a tree planted by the streams of water, which brings forth its fruit in its season" (Ps. 1:3).

When this blessed child was born, he was given the name *Nicholas*, which means *victor over the nations*. And by the blessing of God he truly appeared as a victor over evil, for the good of the whole world. After his birth his mother Nonna was at once freed from her infirmity, and from that time until her death she remained barren. By this nature itself, as it were, bore witness that this woman could have no other son like St. Nicholas: he alone was to be the first and the last. Sanctified in his mother's womb by the God-inspired grace, he showed himself a devout worshipper of God before he saw the light; he began to work miracles before he began to feed on his mother's milk, and he was a faster before he was accustomed to take food. At his birth, while still in the baptismal font, he stood for three hours on his feet without anyone supporting him, thereby rendering honour to the Holy Trinity, whose

1. Patara was a seaport trading city in the Asia Minor province of Lycia (now Anatolia). Founded by the Phoenicians; now in ruins.

great servant and intercessor he was to become. In him one could recognise the future wonderworker even by the way he clung to his mother's breasts; for he fed only from the right breast, signifying his future standing at the right hand of the Lord together with the righteous. He displayed his excellent fasting in that on Wednesdays and Fridays he took his mother's milk only once, and that in the evening, after his parents had said their usual prayers. His father and mother marvelled greatly at this and foresaw what a strict faster their son would be in his life. Having been trained from his swaddling clothes in such abstinence, St. Nicholas kept the strict fast on Wednesday and Friday throughout his whole life until his death. As the youth grew in years, he also grew in understanding, advancing in the virtues in which he was taught by his pious parents. He was like a fruitful field, receiving and nurturing the good seed of instruction and bringing forth each day new fruits of good conduct. When the time came to study Divine Scripture, St. Nicholas, by the strength and keenness of his mind and with the help of the Holy Spirit, in a short time grasped much wisdom and advanced in book learning as befits a good helmsman of Christ's ship and a skilful shepherd of rational sheep. Having attained perfection in word and teaching, he showed himself perfect also in his life. He avoided in every way idle companions and frivolous conversations, shunned talk with women and did not even look at them. St. Nicholas preserved true chastity, always contemplating the Lord with a pure mind and diligently attending the house of God, following the Psalmist who says: “I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God” (Ps. 83).

In the house of God he spent whole days and nights in God-contemplating prayer and in reading the Divine books, learning spiritual understanding, enriching himself with the Divine grace of the Holy Spirit and building within himself a dwelling worthy of Him, according to the words of Scripture: "you are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you" (1 Cor. 3:16).

The Spirit of God truly dwelt in this virtuous and pure youth, and in serving the Lord he burned in spirit. No habits characteristic of youth were noticed in him: by his disposition he was like an elder, for which reason everyone respected him and marvelled at him. An old man who

shows youthful passions becomes a laughingstock to all; on the contrary, if a youth has the disposition of an elder, he is honoured by all with wonder. Youthfulness is unseemly in old age, but old age is worthy of respect and beautiful in youth.

St. Nicholas had an uncle, the bishop of the city of Patara, who bore the same name as his nephew and in whose honour the nephew was named Nicholas. This bishop, seeing that his nephew was advancing in a virtuous life and withdrawing from the world in every way, began to advise his parents to give their son over to the service of God. They heeded the counsel and dedicated to the Lord their child, whom they had themselves received from Him as a gift. For the ancient books relate of them that they were barren and no longer hoped to have children, but with many prayers, tears and almsdeeds they obtained a son from God, and now did not grudge offering him as a gift to the Giver. The bishop, receiving this young elder, who had "the grey hairs of wisdom and the age of old age, an unstained life" (cf. Wis. 4:9), raised him to the rank of presbyter.

When he ordained St. Nicholas as a priest, then, by the prompting of the Holy Spirit, turning to the people who were in the church, he said prophetically:

"I see, brethren, a new sun rising over the earth and presenting itself as a merciful consolation to the sorrowing. Blessed is the flock that shall be deemed worthy to have him as its shepherd, for he will well feed the souls of those who have gone astray, nourish them in the pastures of piety, and prove himself a merciful helper in misfortunes and sorrows."

This prophecy was afterwards truly fulfilled, as will be seen from the further narrative.

Having received the rank of presbyter, St. Nicholas added labours to labours; keeping vigil and abiding in unceasing prayer and fasting, being mortal, he strove to imitate the incorporeal. Living such an angel-like life and day by day flourishing ever more in the beauty of his soul, he was fully worthy to govern the Church. At this time Bishop Nicholas, wishing to go to Palestine to venerate the holy places, entrusted the governance of the Church to his nephew. This priest of God, St.

Nicholas, taking the place of his uncle, took care of the affairs of the Church just as the bishop himself would have done. At this time his parents departed to eternal life. Having received their estate as an inheritance, St. Nicholas distributed it to those in need. For he paid no attention to transitory riches and took no care for their increase, but, renouncing every worldly desire, he strove with all diligence to devote himself to the One God, crying out: "Unto Thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul" (Ps. 24); "Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God" (Ps. 142); "Upon Thee was I cast from the womb; from my mother's belly Thou art my God" (Ps. 21).

And his hand was stretched out to those in need, upon whom he poured out abundant alms, like a many-watered river abounding in streams. Here is one of his many deeds of mercy.

There lived in the city of Patara a certain man, noble and wealthy. Having come to extreme poverty, he lost his former standing, for the life of this age is inconstant. This man had three daughters, who were very beautiful. When he had already lost everything necessary, so that there was nothing to eat and nothing to wear, he, because of his great poverty, conceived the plan of giving his daughters over to fornication and turning his dwelling into a house of harlotry, so as thereby to obtain the means of living and to acquire clothing and food for himself and his daughters. O woe, to what unworthy thoughts extreme poverty leads! Having this unclean thought, the man was already about to carry out his evil intention. But the All-good Lord, who does not wish to see man perish and who mercifully helps us in our misfortunes, put a good thought into the soul of His servant, the holy priest Nicholas, and by secret inspiration sent him to the man who was perishing in soul, to comfort him in his poverty and to forestall him from sin. St. Nicholas, having heard of the extreme poverty of that man and having learned by Divine revelation of his evil intention, felt a deep compassion for him and resolved with his beneficent hand to rescue him, together with his daughters, as from a fire, from poverty and sin. However, he did not wish to bestow his benefaction on that man openly, but resolved to give him a generous alms in secret. St. Nicholas acted thus for two reasons. On the one hand, he wished himself to avoid vain human glory, follow-

ing the words of the Gospel: "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men" (Mt. 6).

On the other hand, he did not wish to offend the man who had once been rich and had now come to extreme poverty. For he knew how burdensome and humiliating alms are for one who has fallen from wealth and glory into indigence, since they remind him of his former prosperity. Therefore St. Nicholas thought it best to act according to the teaching of Christ: "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth" (Mt. 6:6).

So greatly did he shun human glory that he sought to conceal himself even from the one he was benefiting. He took a large sack of gold, came at midnight to that man's house, threw the sack in through the window, and hastened home himself. In the morning the man rose, found the sack, and untied it. At the sight of the gold he was seized with great terror and could not believe his eyes, for he could not have expected such a kindness from anywhere. Yet, sorting the coins with his fingers, he became convinced that the gold was truly before him. Rejoicing in spirit and marveling at this, he wept for joy and long pondered who might have shown him such a kindness, but could think of no one. Ascribing this to the action of Divine Providence, he ceaselessly gave thanks in his soul to his benefactor, offering praise to the Lord who cares for all. After this he gave his elder daughter in marriage, providing as her dowry the gold so wondrously bestowed upon him. St. Nicholas, learning that this man had acted in accordance with his wish, loved him and resolved to show the same mercy to his second daughter as well, intending to preserve her too from sin by a lawful marriage. Preparing another sack of gold, just like the first, he secretly threw it through the same window into the man's house at night, unseen by all. Rising in the morning, the poor man again found gold in his possession. Once more he was filled with amazement and, falling to the ground and weeping, said:

"Merciful God, Architect of our salvation, who redeemed me with Thine own blood and now redeems my house and my children with gold from the snares of the enemy, Thyself show me the servant of Thy mercy and of Thy human-loving goodness. Show me that earthly angel

who preserves us from the ruin of sin, that I may know who delivers us from the poverty that oppresses us and frees us from evil thoughts and intentions. Lord, by Thy mercy, secretly wrought for me by the bountiful hand of Thy saint unknown to me, I am able to give my second daughter in lawful marriage as well, and thus escape the snares of the devil, who sought to multiply my already great ruin by a shameful gain."

Having thus prayed to the Lord and given thanks for His goodness, that man celebrated the marriage of his second daughter. Trusting in God, the father held the sure hope that He would also grant a lawful husband to his third daughter, again secretly bestowing through a beneficent hand the gold needed for this. Wishing to learn who was bringing him gold and from where, the father stayed awake through the night, keeping watch for his benefactor and desiring to see him. Not long passed before the expected benefactor appeared. The servant of Christ, Nicholas, came quietly a third time and, stopping at the usual place, threw a sack of gold, just like the others, through the same window, then hastened at once to his home. Hearing the clink of the gold thrown in through the window, that man ran after the servant of God as fast as he could. Overtaking him and recognizing him—for one could not fail to know the saint by his virtue and noble birth—the man fell at his feet, kissing them and calling the saint deliverer, helper, and savior of souls that had come to utter ruin.

"If the Lord, great in mercy," he said, "had not raised me up through your kindnesses, I, an unhappy father, would long since have perished together with my daughters in the fire of Sodom. But now we have been saved by you and delivered from a dreadful fall into sin."

And he said many more such words to the saint, with tears. Having barely raised him from the ground, the holy servant of God made him swear that he would never, all his life, tell anyone what had happened to him. Having said to him much more for his benefit, the saint sent him back to his house.

Of the many works of mercy of the servant of God we have related only one, so that it may be known how merciful he was to the poor. For we would not have time were we to recount in detail how generous he

was to those in need, how many hungry he fed, how many naked he clothed, and how many he ransomed from their creditors.

After this the Venerable Father Nicholas desired to journey to Palestine, to see and bow down before those holy places where our Lord God, Jesus Christ, walked on His most pure feet. When the ship was sailing near Egypt and the travelers did not know what awaited them, St. Nicholas, who was among them, foresaw that a storm would soon arise, and he told his companions of this, saying that he had seen the devil himself enter the ship in order to drown them all in the depths of the sea. In that very hour the sky was suddenly covered with clouds, and a violent tempest stirred the sea into a terrible turmoil. The travelers were seized with great terror, and, despairing of their salvation and expecting death, they begged St. Father Nicholas to help them, who were perishing in the deep sea.

"If you, servant of God," they said, "do not help us with your prayers to the Lord, we shall perish at once."

Bidding them take courage, place their hope in God, and without any doubt await a speedy deliverance, the saint began to pray fervently to the Lord. At once the sea grew calm, a great stillness came, and the common sorrow was turned into joy.

The rejoicing travelers gave thanks to God and to His servant, St. Father Nicholas, and they marveled doubly both at his prediction of the storm and at the ending of their sorrow. After that, one of the sailors had to climb to the top of the mast. Coming down from there, he lost his hold and fell from the very height onto the middle of the ship; he was killed and lay lifeless. St. Nicholas, ready to help before help was required, at once raised him by his prayer, and the man stood up as though awakening from sleep. After this, hoisting all the sails, the travelers continued their voyage happily, with a favorable wind, and calmly put in at the shore of Alexandria. Having healed many sick and demoniacs there and comforted the sorrowing, the servant of God, St. Nicholas, again set out on his intended way to Palestine.

Having reached the holy city of Jerusalem, St. Nicholas came to Golgotha, where Christ our God, stretching out His most pure hands on the cross, wrought salvation for the human race. Here the servant of

God poured forth fervent prayers from a heart burning with love, offering thanks to our Savior. He visited all the holy places, everywhere making fervent veneration. And when at night he wished to enter the holy church[2] for prayer, the locked church doors opened of themselves, granting unhindered entry to him for whom the gates of heaven also were open. Having stayed in Jerusalem for a long time, St. Nicholas intended to withdraw into the wilderness, but he was stopped by a Divine voice from on high, admonishing him to return to his homeland. The Lord God, who orders all things for our good, did not will that the lamp which by the will of God was to shine for the Metropolis of Lycia should remain hidden under a bushel in the desert. Coming to the ship, the servant of God agreed with the sailors that they would carry him to his native land. But they schemed to deceive him and directed their ship not to Lycia but to another country. When they had sailed from the harbor, St. Nicholas, noticing that the ship was going by another course, fell at the feet of the sailors, begging them to turn the ship toward Lycia. But they paid no attention whatever to his entreaties and continued on the course they had chosen; they did not know that God would not forsake His servant. And suddenly a storm arose, turned the ship in the other direction, and swiftly bore it toward Lycia, threatening the wicked sailors with utter destruction. Thus, borne across the sea by Divine power, St. Nicholas at last arrived in his fatherland. In his guilelessness he did no evil to his malicious enemies. Not only did he not grow angry, but he did not utter a single word of reproach to them; instead, with a blessing he sent them on to their own country. He himself came to the monastery founded by his uncle, the Bishop of Patara, and named St. Sion, and here he proved a welcome guest to all the brethren. Receiving him with great love, as an Angel of God, they delighted in his God-inspired speech and, imitating the good manners with which God had adorned His faithful servant, were edified by his angel-like life. Having found in this monastery a quiet life and a tran-

2. This was a small church on Mount Zion, the only one at that time in the whole city of Jerusalem, which was inhabited by pagans and bore the name Aelia Capitolina. This church, according to tradition, was built in the house where the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the mystery of Communion and where afterward the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles took place.

quil refuge for contemplation, St. Nicholas hoped to spend the rest of his life here without departure. But God pointed him to another path, for He did not want so rich a treasure of virtues, by which the world was to be enriched, to remain enclosed in the monastery like a treasure buried in the earth, but wished it to be open to all, so that through it spiritual commerce might be carried on, winning many souls. And so once, as the saint stood in prayer, he heard a voice from on high:

"Nicholas, if you desire to be worthy of a crown from Me, go and labor for the good of the world."

Hearing this, St. Nicholas was struck with fear and began to ponder what this voice desired and required of him. And again he heard:

"Nicholas, this is not the field in which you are to bring forth the fruit I expect of you; but turn and go out into the world, and let My name be glorified in you."

Then St. Nicholas understood that the Lord required him to leave the labor of silence and go out to serve men for their salvation.

He began to consider where he should go: to his homeland, the city of Patara, or to some other place. Wishing to avoid vain glory among his fellow citizens, and fearing it, he resolved to withdraw to another city where no one knew him. In that same land of Lycia there was the renowned city of Myra, which was the metropolis of all Lycia.[3] It was to this city that St. Nicholas came, guided by the providence of God. Here he was known to no one, and he lived in the city as a beggar, having nowhere to lay his head. He found his only refuge in the house of the Lord, having God alone as his shelter. At that time the hierarch of that city, John, archbishop and first-hierarch of the whole land of Lycia, passed away. Therefore all the bishops of Lycia gathered at Myra to choose a worthy man for the vacant throne. Many men, honored and wise, were proposed as successors to John. Among the electors there was great disagreement, and some of them, moved by divine zeal, said:

“The election of a bishop to this see is not subject to human decision, but is a work of God’s dispensation. It befits us to offer prayer,

3. Myra (now Myri, called Dembre by the Turks) was the chief city of ancient Lycia and lay near the sea, on the river Andrak, at whose mouth was the harbor Andriake.

that the Lord Himself may reveal who is worthy to receive such a rank and to be the shepherd of the whole land of Lycia."

This good counsel met with general approval, and all gave themselves to fervent prayer and fasting. The Lord, who fulfills the desire of those who fear Him, heeding the prayer of the bishops, revealed His good will to the eldest of them. As this bishop was standing in prayer, there appeared before him a man of radiant form, who commanded him to go by night to the doors of the church and observe who would be the first to enter the church.

"This one," He said, "is My chosen; receive him with honor and ordain him archbishop; the name of this man is Nicholas."

The bishop reported this divine vision to the other bishops, and they, hearing it, redoubled their prayers. The bishop who had received the revelation took his place at the spot shown him in the vision and awaited the coming of the desired man. When the time of the morning service came, St. Nicholas, moved by the Spirit, came to the church before all others, for he had the custom of rising at midnight to pray and of coming to the morning service earlier than the rest. As soon as he entered the narthex, the bishop who had received the revelation stopped him and asked him to tell his name. St. Nicholas was silent. The bishop asked him again the same question. The saint answered him gently and quietly:

"My name is Nicholas; I am the servant of your holiness, vladyka."

The pious bishop, hearing such a brief and humble reply, understood both from the very name, Nicholas, foretold to him in the vision, and from the meek and gentle answer, that before him stood the very man whom God had chosen to be the first-hierarch of the Church of Myra. For he knew from Holy Scripture that the Lord looks upon the meek, the silent, and the one who trembles at the word of God. He rejoiced with great joy, as if he had received some hidden treasure. Immediately taking St. Nicholas by the hand, he said to him:

"Follow me, child."

When he had led the saint with honor to the bishops, they were filled with divine sweetness, and, consoled in spirit that they had found the man indicated by God Himself, they led him into the church. The

report of this spread everywhere, and an innumerable multitude of people flocked to the church more swiftly than birds. The bishop who had received the vision turned to the people and cried out:

"Receive, brethren, your shepherd, whom the Holy Spirit Himself has anointed and to whom He has entrusted the care of your souls. He has been appointed not by a human assembly but by God Himself. Now we have him whom we desired, and we have found and received him whom we sought. Under his rule and guidance we shall not lose the hope that we shall stand before God on the day of His appearing and revelation."

The whole people gave thanks to God and rejoiced with ineffable joy. Not enduring human praise, St. Nicholas for a long time refused to accept the sacred rank; but yielding to the fervent entreaties of the council of bishops and of all the people, he ascended the episcopal throne against his will. He was moved to this by a divine vision which had come to him even before the death of Archbishop John. St. Methodius, Patriarch of Constantinople, relates this vision. "Once," he says, "St. Nicholas saw at night the Savior standing before him in all His glory, handing him a Gospel adorned with gold and pearls. On the other side of him St. Nicholas saw the Most Holy Theotokos placing upon his shoulders the omophorion of a hierarch. After this vision a few days passed, and John, Archbishop of Myra, died."

Recalling this vision, and seeing in it the manifest good will of God, and not wishing to refuse the fervent entreaties of the council, St. Nicholas accepted the flock. The council of bishops, with the whole clergy of the Church, performed the consecration over him and celebrated brightly, rejoicing over the shepherd given by God, the hierarch of Christ Nicholas. Thus the Church of God received a bright lamp, which did not remain under a bushel but was set in the episcopal and pastoral place befitting it. Honored with this great rank, St. Nicholas rightly divided the word of truth and wisely instructed his flock in the teaching of the faith.

At the very beginning of his pastorate, the servant of God spoke to himself thus:

"Nicholas! The rank you have accepted requires of you other customs, that you should live not for yourself but for others."

Desiring to teach his rational sheep the virtues, he no longer concealed his virtuous life, as he had before. For previously he had spent his life secretly serving God, who alone knew his labors. But now, after his acceptance of the episcopal rank, his life became open to all, not out of vanity before men, but for their benefit and for the increase of the glory of God, so that the Gospel word might be fulfilled: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 5).

By his good deeds St. Nicholas was, as it were, a mirror for his flock, and, according to the word of the Apostle: "be an example to the faithful in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4).

He was gentle and kind by nature, humble in spirit, and he avoided all vanity. His garments were plain, his food ascetic; he always took only one meal a day, and that in the evening. He spent the whole day in labors befitting his rank, hearing the petitions and needs of those who came to him. The doors of his house were open to all. He was good and accessible to everyone: to orphans he was a father, to the poor a merciful giver, to the weeping a consoler, to the wronged a helper, and to all a great benefactor. To assist him in the administration of the Church he chose two virtuous and wise counselors, invested with the rank of presbyter. These were men known throughout all Greece: Paul of Rhodes and Theodore of Ascalon.

So St. Nicholas tended the flock of rational sheep of Christ that had been entrusted to him. But the envious and wicked serpent, who never ceases to stir up war against the servants of God and cannot bear the prosperity of men of piety, raised a persecution against the Church of Christ through the impious emperors Diocletian and Maximian[4]. At that very time an edict went forth from these emperors throughout the

4. The emperors Diocletian and Maximian (from 284 to 305) were co-rulers, the first reigning in the East, the second in the West. The persecution raised by Diocletian was distinguished by especial cruelty. It began in the city of Nicomedia, where on the very day of Pascha up to 20,000 Christians were burned in the church.

whole empire, commanding that Christians renounce Christ and worship idols. Those who would not obey this edict were to be compelled to it by imprisonment and grievous torments, and at last to be delivered to death. This storm, breathing malice, through the zeal of the champions of darkness and impiety, soon reached the city of Myra as well. The blessed Nicholas, who was the leader of all the Christians in that city, preached the piety of Christ freely and boldly, and was ready to suffer for Christ. Therefore he was seized by the impious tormentors and, together with many Christians, cast into prison. There he remained for no small time, enduring grievous sufferings, bearing hunger and thirst and the cramped confinement of the dungeon. He nourished his fellow prisoners with the word of God and gave them to drink of the sweet waters of piety; establishing them in faith in Christ God, strengthening them upon the unshakable foundation, he exhorted them to be steadfast in confessing Christ and to labor zealously in suffering for the truth. Meanwhile the Christians were again granted freedom, and piety shone forth like the sun after dark clouds, and there came as it were a quiet coolness after the storm. For the Lover of mankind Christ, looking upon His own inheritance, destroyed the impious, casting Diocletian and Maximian down from the imperial throne and abolishing the power of the champions of Hellenic impiety. By the manifestation of His Cross to the emperor Constantine the Great, to whom He was pleased to entrust the Roman dominion, the Lord God «raised up» for His people «an horn of salvation» (Lk. 1:69). Emperor Constantine, having known the One God and placed all his hope in Him, by the power of the Honorable Cross conquered all his enemies, and, commanding the idol-temples to be razed and the Christian churches restored, scattered the vain hopes of his predecessors. He released all who had been imprisoned for Christ, and, honoring them as valiant warriors with great praise, returned these confessors of Christ, each to his own homeland. At that time also the city of Myra received again its shepherd, the great hierarch Nicholas, who had been vouchsafed the crown of martyrdom. Bearing within himself the divine grace, he, as before, healed the passions and infirmities of men, not only of the faithful but also of the unbelieving. By reason of the great grace of God abiding in him, many

glorified him and marveled at him, and all loved him. For he shone with purity of heart and was endowed with all the gifts of God, serving his Lord in holiness and righteousness. At that time there still remained many Hellenic idol-temples, to which impious men were drawn by the devilish suggestion, and many of the inhabitants of Myra remained in perdition. The hierarch of the Most High God, inspired by the zeal of God, passed through all these places, destroying and reducing to dust the idol-temples and cleansing his flock from diabolical defilement. Thus contending with the spirits of wickedness, St. Nicholas came to the temple of Artemis[5], which was very large and richly adorned, presenting itself as a pleasing dwelling for demons. St. Nicholas destroyed this temple of defilement, leveled its lofty edifice with the ground, and scattered into the air the very foundation of the temple, which lay in the earth, arming himself more against the demons than against the temple itself. The wicked spirits, unable to bear the coming of the saint of God, uttered doleful cries, but, vanquished by the prayerful weapon of the invincible warrior of Christ, the hierarch Nicholas, they were compelled to flee from their habitation.

The Right-believing Emperor Constantine, desiring to establish the faith of Christ, commanded that an Ecumenical Council be convened in the city of Nicaea. The holy Fathers of the Council set forth the right teaching, anathematized the Arian heresy and together with it Arius himself[6], and, confessing the Son of God as co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father, restored peace in the holy Divine Apostolic Church. Among the 318 Fathers of the Council was also the hierarch Nicholas. He stood valiantly against the impious teaching of Arius and, together with the holy Fathers of the Council, established and delivered to all the dogmas of the Orthodox faith. The monk of the Studite monastery John relates concerning St. Nicholas that, inspired, like the

5. Artemis, otherwise Diana, a well-known Greek goddess, personified the moon and was considered the protectress of forests and of the hunt.

6. Arius rejected the Divinity of Jesus Christ and did not acknowledge Him as consubstantial with God the Father. Convened by the Equal-to-the-Apostles Emperor Constantine, the First Ecumenical Council took place in 325 under the presidency of the emperor himself, and introduced into ecclesiastical use the Symbol of Faith, afterward supplemented and completed at the Second Ecumenical Council, held at Constantinople in 381.

prophet Elijah, with zeal for God, he put this heretic Arius to shame at the Council not only by word but also by deed, striking him on the cheek. The Fathers of the Council were indignant with the hierarch and, for his bold deed, decreed to deprive him of the episcopal rank. But our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and His Most Blessed Mother, looking down from on high upon the exploit of St. Nicholas, approved his bold action and praised his divine zeal. For some of the holy Fathers of the Council had the same vision as the one vouchsafed to the hierarch himself even before his ordination to the episcopate. They saw that on one side of the hierarch stood Christ the Lord Himself with the Gospel, and on the other the Most Pure Virgin Theotokos with the omophorion, and they offered to the hierarch the insignia of his rank, of which he had been deprived. Perceiving from this that the boldness of the hierarch had been pleasing to God, the Fathers of the Council ceased to reproach the hierarch and rendered him honor as a great friend of God[7]. Returning from the Council to his flock, St. Nicholas brought to it peace and blessing. With his honey-flowing lips he imparted to all the people sound teaching, cut off unrighteous thoughts and reasonings at the very root, and, having reproved the obstinate, insensible heretics who were hardened in malice, drove them from the flock of Christ. As a wise husbandman cleanses all that is on the threshing-floor and in the winepress, gathers the best grains, and winnows away the tares, so the prudent laborer on the threshing-floor of Christ, St. Nicholas, filled the spiritual granary with good fruits, while the tares of heretical delusion he scattered and cast far from the wheat of the Lord. Therefore the holy Church calls him a winnowing-fan, winnowing the tares of Arius' teachings. And he was truly the light of the world and the salt of the earth, for his life was luminous and his word was seasoned with the salt of wisdom. This good shepherd had great care for his flock in all its

7. According to the testimony of A. N. Muravyov, in Nicaea this tradition is still preserved, even among the Turks. In one of the embrasures of this city they show the prison of St. Nicholas. Here, according to tradition, he was confined for having struck Arius at the council, and was kept in chains until he was justified from on high by a heavenly judgment, which was marked by the appearance of the Gospel and the omophorion, as is depicted in icons of the hierarch (Letters from the East, St. Petersburg, 1851, part 1, pp. 106–107).

needs, feeding it not only in the spiritual pasture but also caring for its bodily food.

Once there was a great famine in the land of Lycia, and in the city of Myra there was extreme lack of food. Grieving for the unhappy people perishing from hunger, the hierarch of God appeared in a dream one night to a merchant who was in Italy, who had loaded his whole ship with grain and intended to sail to another country. Giving him as a pledge three gold coins, the hierarch commanded him to sail to Myra and sell the grain there. Waking and finding the gold in his hand, the merchant was struck with terror, marveling at such a dream, which was accompanied by the miraculous appearance of the coins. The merchant did not dare to disobey the command of the hierarch, went to the city of Myra, and sold his bread to its inhabitants. At the same time he did not conceal from them the appearance of St. Nicholas that had come to him in the dream. Having received such comfort in the famine, and listening to the merchant's account, the citizens rendered glory and thanksgiving to God and glorified their wonderful provider, the great hierarch Nicholas.

At that time a rebellion arose in Great Phrygia. Learning of this, Emperor Constantine sent three voivodes with their troops to pacify the rebellious land. These were the voivodes Nepotian, Ursus and Erpilion. With great haste they sailed from Constantinople and stopped at a harbor of the Lycian eparchy which was called the Adriatic shore. There was a city here. Since a strong sea swell prevented further sailing, they stayed in this harbor to wait for calm weather. During the stay some of the soldiers, going ashore to buy what they needed, took much by force. Since this happened often, the inhabitants of that city became embittered, as a result of which at a place called Plakomata there arose between them and the soldiers disputes, quarrels and strife. Learning of this, St. Nicholas decided himself to go to that city to put an end to the internecine strife. Hearing of his coming, all the citizens together with the voivodes went out to meet him and bowed down. The saint asked the voivodes whence and whither they were bound. They told him that they had been sent by the emperor into Phrygia to suppress the rebellion that had arisen there. The saint exhorted them to keep their sol-

diers in obedience and not to allow them to oppress people. After this he invited the voivodes into the city and hospitably entertained them. The voivodes, having punished the guilty soldiers, calmed the disturbance and received the blessing of St. Nicholas. While this was taking place, some citizens came from Myra, lamenting and weeping. Falling at the feet of the saint, they begged him to protect the wronged, telling him with tears that in his absence the governor Eustathius, bribed by envious and wicked men, had sentenced to death three men from their city who were in no way guilty.

"Our whole city," they said, "mourns and weeps and awaits your return, vladyka. For if you had been with us, the governor would not have dared to render such an unrighteous judgment."

Hearing this, the hierarch of God was grieved in soul and, accompanied by the voivodes, at once set out on the journey. Reaching a place called Lion, the hierarch met some travelers and asked them whether they knew anything of the men condemned to death. They answered:

"We left them in the field of Castor and Pollux, being led to execution."

St. Nicholas hastened on, eager to prevent the innocent men from being put to death. Arriving at the place of execution, he saw that a great crowd had gathered there. The condemned men, their hands bound crosswise and their faces covered, had already bowed to the ground, stretched out their bared necks, and were awaiting the stroke of the sword. The Saint saw that the executioner, stern and frenzied, had already drawn his sword. Such a spectacle filled everyone with horror and grief. Joining wrath to meekness, the Hierarch of Christ walked freely through the people, without any fear snatched the sword from the executioner's hand, cast it to the ground, and then freed the condemned men from their bonds. He did all this with great boldness, and no one dared to stop him, for his word was authoritative and the power of God was manifest in his actions: he was great before God and before all men. The men who had been spared from capital punishment, seeing themselves suddenly restored to life from imminent death, shed hot tears and cried out in joy, while all the people gathered there gave thanks to their Hierarch. The governor Eustathius also arrived and

wished to approach the Hierarch. But the servant of God turned away from him with contempt, and when the governor fell at his feet, he pushed him away. Calling down upon him the vengeance of God, St. Nicholas threatened him with torment for his unrighteous rule and promised to tell the Emperor of his deeds. Accused by his own conscience and terrified by the Hierarch's threats, the governor begged for mercy with tears. Repenting of his injustice and desiring reconciliation with the great Father Nicholas, he laid the blame on the city elders, Simonides and Eudoxius. But the lie could not fail to be exposed, for the Hierarch knew well that the governor had condemned innocent men to death, having been bribed with gold. For a long time the governor implored forgiveness, and only when he, with great humility and tears, acknowledged his sin did the servant of Christ grant him pardon.

Seeing all that had taken place, the voivodes who had come with the Hierarch marveled at the zeal and goodness of the great Archpastor of God. Having been granted his holy prayers and received his blessing for their journey, they set out for Phrygia to carry out the imperial command given to them. Arriving at the site of the rebellion, they quickly suppressed it, and, having fulfilled the imperial commission, returned joyfully to Byzantium. The Emperor and all the nobles offered them great praise and honors, and they were admitted to the imperial council. But wicked men, envious of the glory of the voivodes, conceived enmity against them. Plotting evil against them, they came to the governor of the city, Eulavius, and slandered those men, saying:

"The voivodes give no good counsel, for, as we have heard, they introduce innovations and plot evil against the Emperor."

In order to win the governor to their side, they gave him much gold. The governor reported to the Emperor. Hearing of this, the Emperor, without any investigation, ordered the voivodes cast into prison, fearing lest they should flee secretly and carry out their evil design. Languishing in confinement and conscious of their innocence, the voivodes wondered why they had been thrown into prison. After a little time the slanderers began to fear that their calumny and malice would be discovered and that they themselves might suffer. Therefore they came to the governor and earnestly begged him not to let those men live so

long, but to hasten to condemn them to death. Entangled in the nets of love of money, the governor had to bring what he had promised to its end. He at once went to the Emperor and, like a messenger of evil, came before him with a gloomy face and a sorrowful look. At the same time he wished to show that he was deeply concerned for the Emperor's life and faithfully devoted to him. Seeking to rouse the Emperor's anger against the innocent, he began to speak in a flattering and crafty manner, saying:

"O Emperor, not one of those confined in the prison wishes to repent. All of them persist in their evil design, never ceasing to weave plots against you. Therefore command that they be immediately subjected to torment, lest they forestall us and accomplish the evil deed they have planned against the voivodes and against you."

Alarmed by such words, the Emperor at once condemned the voivodes to death. But since it was evening, their execution was postponed until morning. The prison guard learned of this. Having shed many tears in private over the calamity threatening the innocent, he came to the voivodes and said to them:

"It would have been better for me if I had not known you and had not enjoyed pleasant conversation and meals with you. Then I could easily have borne parting from you and would not grieve so in my soul over the misfortune that has come upon you. Morning will come, and the final and dreadful separation will overtake us. I shall no longer see your dear faces nor hear your voices, for the Emperor has commanded your execution. Bequeath to me what I am to do with your property, while there is still time and death has not yet prevented you from expressing your will."

He interrupted his speech with sobs. Learning of their dreadful fate, the voivodes tore their garments and pulled at their hair, saying:

"What enemy envied our lives, and for what cause are we condemned to death as criminals? What have we done that would deserve death?"

They called by name their kinsmen and friends, calling God Himself to witness that they had done no evil, and they wept bitterly. One of them, named Nepotian, remembered St. Nicholas, how at Myra he had

appeared as a glorious helper and good intercessor and had delivered three men from death. And the voivodes began to pray:

"O God of Nicholas, who delivered three men from unrighteous death, look now upon us also, for from men there can be no help for us. Great calamity has come upon us, and there is no one who can deliver us from this affliction. Our voice has failed before our souls depart from the body, and our tongue dries up, scorched by the fire of heartfelt grief, so that we cannot even offer prayer to Thee. Ps. 78: 'Let Thy mercies speedily prevent us, for we are brought very low.' Tomorrow they wish to put us to death; hasten then to our aid and deliver us, the innocent, from death."

The Lord God, who hears the prayers of those who fear Him and, as a Father, pours out mercies upon His children, sent to the condemned men His holy servant, the great Archpastor Nicholas, as a helper. In that night, during sleep, the Hierarch of Christ appeared before the Emperor and said:

"Arise quickly and free the voivodes who are languishing in prison. They have been falsely accused, and they suffer innocently."

The Saint explained the whole matter to the Emperor in detail and added:

"If you do not heed me and do not release them, I shall raise against you a rebellion like the one in Phrygia, and you will perish a wretched death."

Marveling at such boldness, the Emperor began to wonder how this man had dared to enter his inner chambers by night, and said to him:

"Who are you, that you dare to threaten us and our realm?"

He answered:

"My name is Nicholas; I am the hierarch of the Metropolis of Myra."

The Emperor was troubled and, rising, pondered what this vision meant. Meanwhile, in that same night, the Saint also appeared to the governor Eulavius and told him the same things about the condemned men as he had told the Emperor. Awakened from sleep, Eulavius was afraid. While he was pondering this vision, a messenger came to him from the Emperor and told him what the Emperor had seen in a dream. Hastening to the Emperor, the governor related his own vision, and

both marveled that they had seen the same thing. At once the Emperor commanded that the voivodes be brought from the prison, and said to them:

"By what sorceries have you brought such dreams upon us? The man who appeared to us was greatly angered and threatened us, boasting that he would soon bring war upon us."

The voivodes turned to one another in bewilderment, and, knowing nothing, looked at each other with tender gaze. Noticing this, the Emperor softened and said:

"Fear no evil; tell the truth."

They answered with tears and sobs:

"O Emperor, we know of no sorceries and have plotted no evil against your realm; let the All-seeing Lord Himself be witness to this. If we are deceiving you, and you learn anything evil of us, then let there be no mercy or pardon for us or for our kin. From our fathers we learned to honor the Emperor and above all to be faithful to him. So also now we faithfully guard your life and, as befits our rank, have unswervingly carried out the commissions you gave us. Serving you with zeal, we quelled the rebellion in Phrygia, ended the civil strife, and sufficiently proved our courage by our deeds, as those who know this well can testify. Your realm formerly showered us with honors; now you have armed yourself against us in wrath and pitilessly condemned us to a torturous death. Thus, O Emperor, we think we suffer for nothing but our zeal toward you; for it we have been condemned, and instead of the glory and honors we hoped to receive, the fear of death has come upon us."

At such words the Emperor was moved to tenderness and repented of his thoughtless act. For he trembled before the judgment of God and was ashamed of his imperial purple, seeing that he, who was a lawgiver to others, had been ready to commit an unlawful judgment. He looked kindly upon the condemned men and spoke gently with them. Listening to his words with emotion, the voivodes suddenly saw that beside the Emperor sat St. Nicholas, who by signs promised them forgiveness. The Emperor interrupted their speech and asked:

"Who is this Nicholas, and what men did he save? Tell me about this."

Nepotian told him everything in order. Then the Emperor, learning that St. Nicholas was a great servant of God, marveled at his boldness and his great zeal in defending the wronged, freed those voivodes, and said to them:

"It is not I who grant you life, but the great servant of the Lord, Nicholas, whom you called upon for help. Go to him and bring him your thanksgiving. Tell him also from me that I have fulfilled your command, and let not the servant of Christ be angry with me."

With these words he handed them a golden Gospel, a golden censer adorned with precious stones, and two lamps, and commanded that all of these be given to the church at Myra. Having received their miraculous deliverance, the voivodes at once set out on their way. Arriving at Myra, they rejoiced and were glad that they had once again been granted to see the hierarch. They brought great thanksgiving to St. Nicholas for his miraculous help and sang: Ps. 34 – "Lord, who is like unto Thee, who deliverest the weak from the strong, and the poor and needy from him that spoileth him?"

They distributed generous alms to the beggars and the poor, and returned home safely.

Such are the works of God, by which the Lord glorified His servant. The report of them, as on wings, flew everywhere, crossed the sea and spread throughout the whole world, so that there was no place where they did not know of the great and wondrous miracles of the great hierarch Nicholas, which he wrought by the grace given him by the Almighty Lord.

Once, travelers sailing on a ship from Egypt to the land of Lycia were subjected to a strong sea swell and storm. The sails were already torn by the whirlwind, the ship shuddered under the blows of the waves, and all despaired of their salvation. At this time they remembered the great hierarch Nicholas, whom they had never seen and had only heard of, that he is a swift helper to all who call upon him in their troubles. They turned to him with prayer and began to call upon

him for help. The hierarch at once appeared before them, entered the ship and said:

"You have called upon me, and I have come to help you; do not be afraid!"

All saw that he took the helm and began to steer the ship. Just as our Lord Jesus Christ once rebuked the wind and the sea (Mt. 8:26), the hierarch at once commanded the storm to cease, remembering the words of the Lord: Jn. 14 – "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do, shall he do also."

Thus the faithful servant of the Lord commanded both sea and wind, and they were obedient to him. After this, the travelers, with a favorable wind, put in at the city of Myra. Stepping ashore, they went into the city, wishing to see the one who had delivered them from danger. They met the hierarch on his way to the church and, recognizing in him their benefactor, fell at his feet, bringing him thanksgiving. The wondrous Nicholas not only delivered them from danger and death, but also showed concern for their spiritual salvation. By his foresight he discerned with his spiritual eyes in them the sin of fornication, which removes a man from God and turns him aside from keeping the commandments of God, and said to them:

"Children, I beseech you, reflect within yourselves and correct your hearts and thoughts for the pleasing of the Lord. For although we may hide ourselves from many people and consider ourselves righteous, nothing can be hidden from God. Therefore strive with all diligence to preserve the holiness of the soul and the purity of the body. For as the Divine Apostle Paul says: 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy' (1 Cor. 3:16–17)."

Having instructed those men with words profitable to the soul, the hierarch dismissed them in peace. For the hierarch by his disposition was like a loving father, and his countenance shone with divine grace, like that of an Angel of God. From his face, as from the face of Moses, there went forth a radiant ray, and those who merely looked upon him derived great benefit. Whoever was burdened by some passion or sorrow of the soul needed only to turn his gaze upon the hierarch to re-

ceive consolation in his grief; and whoever conversed with him already progressed in goodness. And not only Christians, but also unbelievers, if any of them chanced to hear the sweet and honey-flowing words of the hierarch, were moved to tenderness and, casting aside the malice of unbelief rooted in them from childhood, and receiving into their heart the right word of truth, entered upon the path of salvation.

The great servant of God lived many years in the city of Myra, shining with divine goodness, according to the word of Scripture: "As the morning star in the midst of a cloud, and as the full moon in the days, and as the sun shining upon the temple of the Most High, and as the rainbow giving light in the bright clouds, and as the flower of roses in the spring of the year, as lilies by the waters' courses, as a branch of Lebanon in the summer days" (Sir. 50:6–8).

Having reached deep old age, the hierarch paid the debt of human nature and, after a brief bodily illness, peacefully ended his temporal life. With joy and psalmody he passed into eternal blessed life, accompanied by the holy Angels and met by the choirs of the saints. At his burial there gathered the bishops of the land of Lycia with all the clergy and monks, and an innumerable multitude of people from all the cities. The honorable body of the hierarch was laid with honor in the cathedral church of the Metropolis of Myra on the sixth day of the month of December[8]. From the holy relics of the servant of God many miracles were accomplished. For his relics exuded a fragrant and healing myrrh, with which the sick were anointed and received healing. For this reason people came from all ends of the earth to his tomb, seeking healing for their infirmities and receiving it. For by that holy myrrh were healed not only bodily ailments but also spiritual ones, and evil spirits were driven out. For the hierarch, not only during his life but also after his repose, armed himself against demons and vanquished them, as he vanquishes them still.

Certain God-fearing men who lived at the mouth of the river Tanais, hearing of the myrrh-streaming and healing relics of St. Nicholas, the

8. The year of the death of Hierarch Nicholas is not known exactly: according to some, the Wonderworker of God died in 341, and according to others, the year of his death is placed between 346 and 352.

hierarch of Christ, resting in Myra of Lycia, resolved to sail there by sea to venerate the relics. But the wicked demon, once driven out of the shrine of Artemis by St. Nicholas, seeing that a ship was being readied to sail to this great father, and angered at the hierarch for the destruction of the shrine and for his own expulsion, plotted to hinder these men from completing the intended journey and thus deprive them of the holy relics. He took the form of a woman carrying a vessel filled with oil, and said to them:

"I would like to bring this vessel to the tomb of the hierarch, but I am very much afraid of a sea voyage, for it is dangerous for a weak woman suffering from a stomach ailment to sail upon the sea. Therefore I beseech you, take this vessel, bring it to the tomb of the saint, and pour the oil into the lamp."

With these words the demon handed the God-loving men the vessel. It is not known with what demonic enchantments that oil was mixed, but it was destined for the harm and destruction of the travelers. Not knowing the deadly effect of that oil, they fulfilled the request and, taking the vessel, put off from shore and for a whole day sailed safely. But in the morning a north wind arose, and their voyage became difficult.

Suffering many days in an unfavorable voyage, they lost patience from the prolonged sea swell and resolved to turn back. They had already turned the ship toward their own shore when there appeared before them St. Nicholas in a small boat and said:

"Where are you sailing, men, and why, leaving your former course, are you returning? You can calm the storm and make the way convenient for sailing. Devilish schemes hinder you from sailing, for the vessel of oil was given to you not by a woman but by a demon. Cast the vessel into the sea, and at once your voyage will become safe."

Hearing this, the men cast the demonic vessel into the depths of the sea. At once black smoke and flame came out of it, the air was filled with a great stench, the sea opened up, the water boiled and seethed to the very bottom, and the spray was like fiery sparks. The people on the ship fell into great terror and cried out in fear, but the helper who appeared to them, bidding them take courage and not be afraid, calmed the raging storm and, delivering the travelers from fear, made their

way to Lycia safe. For at once a cool and fragrant wind blew upon them, and with joy they sailed safely to the desired city. Having venerated the myrrh-streaming relics of their swift helper and intercessor, they brought thanksgiving to Almighty God and offered a moleben to the great father Nicholas. After this they returned to their land, telling everywhere and to all what had happened to them on the way. Many great and glorious miracles did this great wonderworker perform on land and on sea. He helped those in distress, saved from drowning and brought up from the depths of the sea, freed from captivity and brought the freed home, delivered from bonds and prison, protected from the sword's stroke, released from death, and granted many healings: to the blind, sight; to the lame, walking; to the deaf, hearing; to the mute, the gift of speech. He enriched many who were suffering in poverty and extreme want, gave food to the hungry, and appeared to all in every need as a ready helper, a warm defender and a swift intercessor and protector. And now also he helps those who call upon him and delivers them from troubles. His miracles cannot be counted exactly, just as it is impossible to describe them all in detail. This great wonderworker is known by East and West, and his wonders are known in all parts of the earth. May the Triune God, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, be glorified in him, and may his holy name be praised by the lips of all forever. Amen.

The miracles of St. Nicholas that occurred after his repose

Many wonders did St. Nicholas work, not only during his lifetime but also after his death. Who would not marvel to hear of his wondrous miracles! For not one country and not one region, but the whole world under heaven, has been filled with the miracles of St. Nicholas. Go to the Greeks and there they marvel at them; go to the Latins and there they are astonished by them, and in Syria they extol them. Throughout the whole earth men marvel at St. Nicholas the Hierarch. Come to Rus', and you will see that there is no town and no village where the miracles of St. Nicholas are not found in abundance.

In the time of the Greek emperor Leo and of Patriarch Athanasius, the following most glorious miracle of St. Nicholas took place[9]. The

Great Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra, appeared at midnight in a vision to a certain pious elder, merciful to the poor and hospitable to strangers, named Theophanes, and said:

"Awake, Theophanes, arise and go to the icon-painter Aggeus, and bid him paint three icons: of our Saviour Jesus Christ, the Lord who created heaven and earth and formed man; of the Most Pure Lady, the Mother of God; and of the intercessor for the Christian race, Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra, for it behooves me to appear at Constantinople. When he has painted these three icons, present them to the Patriarch and the whole Council. Go quickly and do not disobey."

Having said this, the saint became invisible. Awaking from his sleep, that God-loving man Theophanes was struck with fear by the vision, and at once went to the icon-painter Aggeus and begged him to paint three great icons: of Christ the Saviour, of the Most Pure Mother of God, and of St. Nicholas the Hierarch. By the will of the merciful Saviour, His Most Pure Mother and St. Nicholas, Aggeus painted three icons and brought them to Theophanes. He took the icons, set them up in the upper room, and said to his wife:

"Let us prepare a meal in our house and pray to God for our sins."

She agreed gladly. Theophanes went to the market, bought food and drink for thirty gold coins, and, bringing them home, prepared a fitting feast for the Patriarch. Then he went to the Patriarch and asked him and the whole Council to bless his house and partake of food and drink. The Patriarch consented, came with the Council to the house of Theophanes, and, entering the upper room, saw three icons standing there: on one was depicted our Lord Jesus Christ, on another the Most Pure Mother of God, and on the third St. Nicholas. Approaching the first icon, the Patriarch said:

"Glory to Thee, O Christ God, who didst create all creation. It was fitting to paint this image."

Then, approaching the second icon, he said:

"It is well that this image of the Most Holy Theotokos, the intercessor for the whole world, has also been painted."

9. This was in the middle of the eighth century, under the emperor Leo the Isaurian.

Approaching the third icon, the Patriarch said:

"This is the image of Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra. It should not have been depicted on so great an icon. For he was the son of simple people, Theophanes and Nonna, who came from peasants."

Calling the master of the house, the Patriarch said to him:

"Theophanes, do not bid Aggeus paint the image of Nicholas on such a large scale."

And he ordered the icon of the hierarch to be taken out, saying:

"It is not fitting for him to stand in a row with Christ and the Most Pure One."

The pious Theophanes, carrying the icon of St. Nicholas out of the upper room with great sorrow, set it in a storeroom in an honored place, and, choosing from the Council a choir-singer, a man wondrous and wise named Callistus, he asked him to stand before the icon and glorify St. Nicholas. He himself was greatly grieved by the Patriarch's words, who had ordered the icon of St. Nicholas removed from the upper room. But Scripture says: 1 Kgdms. 2: "Them that honour Me I will honour." So said the Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom, as we shall see, the hierarch himself would be glorified.

Having glorified God and the Most Pure One, the Patriarch sat down at table with his whole Council, and there was a feast. After the meal the Patriarch rose, magnified God and the Most Pure One, and, having drunk wine, rejoiced together with the whole Council. Callistus, meanwhile, was praising and glorifying the great hierarch Nicholas. But then the wine ran short, while the Patriarch and those with him still wished to drink and make merry. And one of those gathered said:

"Theophanes, bring more wine for the Patriarch and make the feast pleasant."

He answered:

"There is no more wine, my lord, and the market is already closed, so there is nowhere to buy it."

Grieving, he remembered St. Nicholas, how he had appeared to him in a vision and bidden him paint three icons: of the Saviour, of the Most Pure Mother of God, and of himself. Secretly entering the storeroom, he fell before the image of the hierarch and said with tears:

"O St. Nicholas! Your birth was wondrous and your life holy; you have healed many who were sick. I pray you, show now a miracle for me, a wretched man: add wine for me."

Having said this and made the sign of the cross, he went to where the wine vessels stood; and by the prayer of the holy wonderworker Nicholas, those vessels were full of wine. Taking the wine with joy, Theophanes brought it to the Patriarch. He drank and praised it, saying:

"I have never drunk such wine."

And those who drank said that Theophanes had kept the best wine until the end of the feast. But he concealed the marvellous miracle of St. Nicholas.

In merriment the Patriarch and the Council withdrew to the house beside St. Sophia. In the morning a certain nobleman named Theodore, from a village called Sierdalsky, near the island of Myra, came to the Patriarch and begged him to go to his house, for his only daughter was possessed by a demonic affliction, and to read the Holy Gospel over her head. The Patriarch consented, took the Gospel book, went with the whole Council into a ship, and set sail. When they were on the open sea, a storm raised a great swell, the ship capsized, and all fell into the water and swam, crying out and praying to God, the Most Pure Mother of God, and St. Nicholas. And the Most Pure Mother of God interceded with her Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, on behalf of the Council, that the priestly order might not perish. Then the ship righted itself, and by the mercy of God the whole Council climbed back into it. Sinking, Patriarch Athanasius remembered his sin before St. Nicholas and, crying out, prayed and said:

"O great hierarch of Christ, Archbishop of Myra, wonderworker Nicholas, I have sinned before you. Forgive me and have mercy on me, a sinful and wretched man. Save me from the depths of the sea, from this bitter hour and from untimely death."

O glorious miracle: the high-minded was humbled, and the humble was wondrously exalted and gloriously honoured.

Suddenly St. Nicholas appeared, walking upon the sea as upon dry land, drew near to the Patriarch and took him by the hand, saying:

"Athanasius, have you needed help from me, who come from simple people, in the depths of the sea?"

He, scarcely able to open his lips, exhausted, said, weeping bitterly:

"O St. Nicholas, great hierarch, swift to help, do not remember my wicked high-mindedness. Deliver me from this untimely death in the depths of the sea, and I shall glorify you all the days of my life."

And the hierarch said to him:

"Do not fear, brother. Behold, Christ delivers you by my hand. Sin no more, lest something worse befall you. Go into your ship."

Having said this, St. Nicholas took the Patriarch out of the water and set him on the ship, saying:

"You are saved. Go again to your service in Constantinople."

And the saint became invisible. Seeing the Patriarch, all cried out:

"Glory to Thee, O Christ the Saviour, and to Thee, O Most Pure Sovereign Lady, Mother of God, who have delivered our lord from drowning."

As if awakening from sleep, the Patriarch asked them:

"Where am I, brethren?"

"On your ship, our lord," they answered, "and we are all unharmed."

Weeping, the Patriarch said:

"Brethren, I have sinned before St. Nicholas. Truly he is great: he walks upon the sea as upon dry land, took me by the hand and set me on the ship. Truly he is swift to help all who call upon him in faith."

The ship quickly sailed back to Constantinople. Disembarking with the whole Council, the Patriarch went with tears to the church of St. Sophia and sent for Theophanes, bidding him bring at once that wondrous icon of the hierarch Nicholas. When Theophanes brought the icon, the Patriarch fell before it with tears and said:

"I have sinned, O St. Nicholas. Forgive me, a sinner."

Having said this, he took the icon in his hands, kissed it reverently together with the members of the Council, and carried it into the church of St. Sophia. On the next day he founded in Constantinople a stone church in the name of St. Nicholas. When the church was built, the Patriarch himself consecrated it on the feast day of St. Nicholas. And the hierarch healed on that day *40* sick men and women. Then the

Patriarch gave thirty litras of gold for the adornment of the church, and many villages and gardens. He also established beside it a glorious monastery. And many came there: the blind, the lame and the lepers. Touching that icon of St. Nicholas, all of them went away healed, glorifying God and His wonderworker.

In Constantinople there lived a certain man named Nicholas, who earned his living by handiwork. Being pious, he resolved never to pass the days dedicated to the memory of the hierarch Nicholas without remembering the servant of God. This he observed unfailingly, according to the word of Scripture: Prov. 3, "Honour the Lord from thy substance and from the firstfruits of all thine increase," and he always kept this firmly in mind. Thus he attained deep old age, and, unable to work, fell into poverty. The day of the memory of St. Nicholas drew near, and, pondering how he should act, the old man said to his wife:

"The day of the great hierarch of Christ, Nicholas, whom we honour, is approaching. How shall we poor people, in our penury, keep this day?"

The pious wife answered her husband:

"You know, my lord, that the end of our life has come, for old age has overtaken both you and me. Even if we were to end our lives today, do not change your intention, and do not forget your love for the saint."

She showed her husband her carpet and said:

"Take the carpet, go and sell it, and buy everything needed for a worthy observance of the memory of St. Nicholas. We have nothing else, and we have no need of this carpet, for we have no children to whom we could leave it."

Hearing this, the pious old man praised his wife, and taking the carpet, he set out. As he walked across the square where the column of the holy Emperor Constantine the Great stands, and passed the church of St. Platon, he was met by St. Nicholas, always ready to help, in the form of a venerable old man, who said to the one carrying the carpet:

"Dear friend, where are you going?"

"I need to go to the market," he answered.

Drawing nearer, St. Nicholas said:

"A good errand. But tell me, for how much do you wish to sell this carpet? For I would like to buy your carpet."

The old man said to the saint:

"This carpet was bought in its time for eight gold coins; now I will take for it whatever you give me."

The saint said to the old man:

"Are you willing to take six gold coins for it?"

"If you give me that much," said the old man, "I will take it gladly."

St. Nicholas put his hand into the pocket of his garment, took out gold, and, placing six great gold coins in the old man's hands, said to him:

"Take this, friend, and give me the carpet."

The old man took the gold gladly, for the carpet was worth less than this. Taking the carpet from the old man's hands, St. Nicholas withdrew. When they had parted, those present in the square said to the old man:

"Are you seeing a phantom, old man, that you are talking alone?"

For they had seen only the old man and heard only his voice; the saint was invisible and inaudible to them. Meanwhile St. Nicholas came with the carpet to the old man's wife and said to her:

"Your husband is my old friend. Meeting me, he made this request of me: out of love for me, carry this carpet to my wife, for I must take one thing somewhere; you keep it as your own."

Having said this, the hierarch became invisible. Seeing an honorable man shining with light, and having received the carpet from him, the woman was too afraid to ask who he was. Thinking that her husband had forgotten the words she had spoken and his own love for the saint, the woman became angry with her husband and said:

"Woe is me, wretched that I am! My husband is a transgressor of the law and full of lies!"

Speaking these and similar words, she did not even want to look at the carpet, burning with love for the saint.

Not knowing what had happened, her husband bought everything needed for the celebration of the day of St. Nicholas's memory and went to his hut, rejoicing at the sale of the carpet and that he would not

have to forsake his pious custom. When he came home, his angry wife met him with bitter words:

"From now on, go away from me, for you have lied to St. Nicholas. Truly Christ, the Son of God, said: Lk. 9 – 'No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'"

Having said these and similar words, she brought the carpet to her husband and said:

"Here, take it; you will not see me again. You have lied to St. Nicholas, and therefore you will lose everything you have gained by observing his memory. For it is written: 'Whoever keeps the whole law, but stumbles in one point, has become guilty of all' (Jas. 2:10)."

Hearing this from his wife and seeing his carpet, the old man marveled and could not find words to answer his wife. He stood for a long time and at last understood that St. Nicholas had worked a miracle. Sighing from the depths of his heart and filled with joy, he raised his hands to heaven and said:

"Glory to Thee, Christ God, who workest miracles through St. Nicholas!"

And the old man said to his wife:

"For the fear of God, tell me, who brought you this carpet, a man or a woman, an old man or a youth?"

His wife answered him:

"A bright, honorable old man, clothed in shining garments, brought us this carpet and said to me: 'Your husband is my friend; therefore, meeting me, he begged me to carry this carpet to you; take it.' Having taken the carpet, I did not dare to ask the one who brought it who he was, seeing him shining with light."

Hearing this from his wife, the old man was amazed, and he showed her the part of the gold that remained to him and all that he had bought for the celebration of St. Nicholas's day: food, wine, prosphora, and candles.

"As the Lord lives!" he exclaimed. "The man who bought my carpet and brought it back again to our poor and humble home is truly St. Nicholas, for those who saw me talking with him said: 'Are you seeing a phantom?' They saw only me, and he was invisible."

Then both the old man and his wife cried out, giving thanks to Almighty God and praise to the great Hierarch of Christ Nicholas, the swift helper of all who call upon him in faith. Filled with joy, they at once went to the church of St. Nicholas, carrying the gold and the carpet, and told the whole clergy and all who were there what had happened. And all the people, hearing their account, glorified God and St. Nicholas, who shows mercy to his servants. Then they sent to Patriarch Michael[10] and told him everything. The patriarch commanded that the old man be given assistance from the property of the church of St. Sophia. And they kept the feast in honor, with the lifting up of praise and with hymns.

In Constantinople there lived a pious man named Epiphanius. He was very rich and held in great honor by the Emperor Constantine[11], and he had many slaves. Once he wished to buy a youth to serve him, and on the third day of the month of December, taking a litra of gold of 72 gold coins, he mounted his horse and rode to the market where merchants arriving from Rus' sell slaves. He failed to buy a slave and returned home. Dismounting, he entered the chamber, took from his pocket the gold which he had taken to the market, and, putting it down somewhere in the chamber, forgot the place where he had put it. This happened to him from the ancient evil enemy, the devil, who constantly wars against the Christian race in order to increase honor on earth. Unable to endure the piety of that man, he plotted to cast him into the abyss of sin. In the morning the nobleman summoned the youth who served him and said:

"Bring me the gold which I gave you yesterday; I have to go to the market."

Hearing this, the youth was frightened, for his master had not given him any gold, and he said:

"You did not give me any gold, master."

The master said:

"O wicked and lying head! Tell me, where did you put the gold I gave you?"

10. Michael Cerularius, from 1043 to 1058.
11. Constantine Monomachus is meant, who reigned from 1042 to 1060.

The other, having nothing, swore that he did not understand what his master was talking about. The nobleman was angered and ordered the servants to bind the youth, beat him without mercy, and fetter him.

He himself said:

"I will decide his fate when the feast of St. Nicholas has passed," for that feast was to fall on the next day.

Shut up alone in the room, the youth cried out with tears to Almighty God, who delivers those who are in trouble:

"O Lord my God, Jesus Christ, Almighty, Son of the Living God, who dwellest in unapproachable light! I cry to Thee, for Thou knowest the human heart; Thou art the Helper of orphans, the Deliverance of those in distress, the Consolation of the sorrowing: deliver me from this affliction which I do not know. Work a merciful deliverance, so that my master too, freed from the sin and injustice done to me, may glorify Thee with joy of heart, and that I, Thy unworthy servant, freed from this affliction that has unjustly befallen me, may give Thee thanks for Thy love for mankind."

Speaking these and similar words with tears, adding prayer to prayer and tears to tears, the youth cried out to St. Nicholas:

"O honorable father, St. Nicholas, deliver me from this misfortune! You know that I am innocent of what my master says against me. Tomorrow will be your feast, and I am in great distress."

Night came, and the weary youth fell asleep. St. Nicholas, always swift to help all who call upon him in faith, appeared to him and said:

"Do not grieve: Christ will deliver you through me, His servant."

At once his fetters fell from his feet, and he rose and offered praise to God and to St. Nicholas. At that same hour the hierarch also appeared to his master and rebuked him:

"Why have you done injustice to your servant, Epiphanius? You are yourself to blame, for you forgot where you put the gold, and you tormented the youth without cause, though he is faithful to you. But since you did not devise this yourself, and the ancient evil enemy, the devil, taught you, I have appeared so that your love for God may not fail. Rise and free the youth; but if you disobey me, a great misfortune will overtake you yourself."

Then, pointing with his finger to the place where the gold lay, St. Nicholas said:

"Rise, take your gold, and free the youth."

Having said this, he became invisible.

The nobleman Epiphanius awoke in trembling, went to the place in the chamber indicated to him by the saint, and found the gold which he himself had put there. Then, seized with fear and filled with joy, he said:

"Glory to Thee, Christ God, Hope of the whole Christian race; glory to Thee, Hope of the hopeless, swift Consolation of those in despair; glory to Thee, who hast shown to the whole world the luminary and the swift rising of those fallen into sin, St. Nicholas, who heals not only bodily infirmities but also the snares of the soul."

All in tears, he fell down before the venerable icon of the hierarch St. Nicholas and said:

"I thank you, honorable father, for you have saved me, unworthy and sinful, and have come to me, wretched as I am, cleansing me of my sins. What shall I render to you for having looked upon me and come to me?"

Having said this and things like it, the nobleman came to the youth, and seeing that the fetters had fallen from him, he was seized with still greater terror and reproached himself severely. At once he ordered the youth to be freed and did everything he could to calm him; and he himself kept vigil the whole night, thanking God and St. Nicholas, who had delivered him from such a sin. When the bell rang for Matins, he rose, took the gold, and went with the youth to the church of St. Nicholas. There he joyfully told everyone what mercy God and St. Nicholas had shown him. And all glorified God, who works such wonders through His saints. When Matins had been sung, the master said in the church to the youth:

"Child, it is not I, a sinner, but your God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and His holy saint Nicholas, may they set you free from bondage, so that I too may one day be forgiven the wrong which I, in ignorance, have done you."

Having said this, he divided the gold into three parts: the first he gave to the church of St. Nicholas, the second he distributed to the poor, and the third he gave to the youth, saying:

"Take this, child, and you will owe no one anything except the one Hierarch Nicholas. As for me, I will care for you as a loving father."

Giving thanks to God and St. Nicholas, Epiphanius returned joyfully to his house.

Once in Kiev, on the day of the memory of the holy martyrs Boris and Gleb, a multitude of people gathered from all the cities and villages for the feast of the holy martyrs. A certain Kievan, who had great faith in St. Nicholas and in the holy martyrs Boris and Gleb, took a boat and sailed to Vyshgorod, to venerate the tomb of the holy martyrs Boris and Gleb,[12] taking with him candles, incense and prosphora, everything needed for a worthy celebration. Having venerated the relics of the saints and rejoiced in spirit, he set off homeward. As he was sailing on the river Dnieper, his wife, who was holding a child in her arms, dozed off and let the child fall into the water, and it drowned. The father began to tear the hair from his head, crying out:

"Woe is me, holy Nicholas! Did I have such great faith in you only for you not to save my child from drowning! Who will be the heir of my estate; whom shall I teach to celebrate in memory of you, my protector, the bright festival? How shall I tell of your great mercy, which you poured out on the whole world and on me, poor man, when my child drowned? I wished to raise him, instructing him in your wonders, so that after my death they would praise me for having a child who keeps the memory of St. Nicholas. But you, Hierarch, have given sorrow not to me alone but to yourself as well, for soon the very memory of you in my house must cease, since I am old and awaiting my end. If you had wished to save the child, you could have saved him, but you yourself allowed him to drown, and did not deliver my only child from the depths of the sea. Or do you think I am unaware of your wonders? They are without number, and the tongue of man cannot tell them, and I, holy father, believe that all things are possible for you, whatever you wish to

12. The relics of the holy Boris and Gleb were at that time still in Vyshgorod near Kiev. The miracle spoken of took place between 1087 and 1091.

accomplish; but my transgressions have prevailed. Now I understand, tormented by sorrow, that had I kept the commandments of God without blemish, the whole of creation would have been subject to me, as Adam was in Paradise before the fall. But now all creation rises up against me: water drowns, beasts tear, serpents swallow, lightning burns, birds peck, cattle run wild and trample everything, men slay, and the bread given us for food does not satisfy us, but by the will of God becomes our ruin. We, endowed with soul and reason and created in the image of God, yet do not fulfill as we ought the will of our Creator. But do not be angry with me, holy father Nicholas, for speaking so boldly, for I do not despair of my salvation, having you as my helper."

His wife tore at her hair and beat herself on the cheeks. At last they reached the city and entered their house in sorrow. Night came, and behold, Nicholas, the Hierarch of Christ, swift to help all who call upon him, performed a wondrous miracle such as had not been known in former times. At night he took the drowned child from the river and laid him, alive and unharmed, in the choir loft of the church of St. Sophia. When the time for morning prayer came, the sexton entered the church and heard a child's crying in the choir loft. For a long while he stood in perplexity:

"Who has let a woman up into the choir loft?"

He went to the one in charge of order in the loft and began to reprimand him; the other said he knew nothing, but the sexton rebuked him:

"You are caught in the act, for children are crying in the loft."

The keeper of the loft was frightened, and going to the lock, he found it untouched and heard a child's voice. Entering the loft, he saw before the icon of St. Nicholas a child, all soaked through with water. Not knowing what to think, he reported this to the metropolitan. After serving Matins, the metropolitan sent to gather the people in the square and to ask them whose child lay in the choir loft of the church of St. Sophia. All the citizens went to the church, marveling how a child, wet with water, had come to be in the loft. The child's father also came to wonder at the miracle, and seeing the child, he recognized him. But not

believing his own eyes, he went to his wife and told her everything in order. She at once began to reproach her husband, saying:

"How can you fail to understand that this is a miracle wrought by St. Nicholas?"

She hastened into the church, recognized her child, and, without touching him, fell down before the icon of St. Nicholas and prayed with tenderness and tears. Her husband, standing at a distance, wept. When all the people heard of this, they flocked to see the miracle, and the whole city gathered, glorifying God and St. Nicholas. The metropolitan celebrated a solemn festival, such as is kept on the day of the memory of St. Nicholas, glorifying the Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Troparion, Tone 4:

Thou didst show thyself to thy flock as a rule of faith and an image of meekness and temperance, a teacher of the truth of things: wherefore thou hast gained the heights through humility and wealth through poverty. O Hierarch, Father Nicholas, intercede with Christ God that our souls be saved.

Kontakion, Tone 3:

Thou didst reveal thyself in Myra as a holy celebrant of the mysteries, for, fulfilling the Gospel of Christ, O Venerable One, thou didst lay down thy soul for thy people, and didst save the innocent from death. Wherefore thou wast sanctified as a great mystagogue of the grace of God.

* * *



THE SEVENTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 7

7 декабря

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

Life of Our Holy Father Ambrose, Bishop of Milan

Житие святого отца нашего Амвросия, епископа Медиоланского

St. Ambrose[1] was the son of the nobleman Ambrose, Roman governor of Gaul[2] and other western lands. Out of love for his son, this nobleman gave him the same name that he himself bore.

Even in the saint's infancy there was a sign of the spiritual sweetness he would one day bring to the Church of Christ. One day, in the middle of the day, the swaddled infant Ambrose lay in the open air and slept with his mouth open. Suddenly a swarm of bees flew in, settled upon the infant, and covered all his face and mouth; one could see the bees entering the infant's mouth and coming out again, leaving their honey upon his tongue. Seeing this, the nurse wanted to drive the bees away, for she feared they might harm the child. But Ambrose's father, before whose eyes this had taken place, stopped the nurse, wishing to see how the wonder would end. And behold, after a little while the bees rose and flew upward until they disappeared from sight. The infant's father marveled and said:

"If this child grows up, he will be great among men."

1. Ambrose of Milan was born about the year 340 in the city of Trier, where his parents then lived.

2. Under the name of Gaul, in the ancient world, was known a vast country which embraced, besides present-day France, also Belgium, part of the Netherlands, the trans-Rhenish regions of Germany and most of Switzerland. Moreover, the father of Saint Ambrose of Milan, likewise named Ambrose, was also governor of Spain. He had other children, older than Ambrose: a daughter Marcellina and a son Satyrus, likewise numbered among the saints by the Western Church.

Thus, even in the infancy of His servant, the Lord already showed that the words of Scripture would be fulfilled in him: "A pleasant word is a honeycomb, sweet to the soul" (Prov. 16).

For the swarm of bees represented the delightful teachings and writings of St. Ambrose, by which he fashioned spiritual honeycombs that gladden the hearts of men and raise them from earth to heaven. When he began to grow older and lived in Rome with his mother, who was then a widow and had vowed her virginity to God, it once happened that he saw people kissing a bishop's hand. Afterward, while playing in his parents' house, he held out his hand to the household and said:

"Kiss it, for I too shall be a bishop."[3]

The Holy Spirit spoke these words through him as a foretelling of what was to come; but the adults, not understanding that the grace of God dwelling in the child was preparing him for the rank of bishop, restrained him, as though he were speaking thoughtlessly.

After the death of St. Ambrose's father, his mother moved to Rome and gave him and his elder brother Satyrus the finest education; and his sister, a virgin, fostered in him a love of virginity.[4]

Having studied the art of eloquence, Ambrose himself became a renowned orator, possessed of persuasive power. He defended the wronged, aided the unfortunate, rebuked those who acted unjustly, and helped establish the truth in court. For his wisdom, Probus, the chief magistrate of the city of Rome, took him into his service as an adviser. Ambrose was then appointed governor of the Roman provinces of Liguria[5] and Aemilia.[6] At that time, Auxentius, bishop of Milan,[7] died. He

3. In the words of the author of the Life of Saint Ambrose, his deacon and secretary Paulinus, in this case "the Spirit of the Lord spoke in him, preparing him for the priesthood."

4. In Rome, not far from the Capitol, one is still shown the house in which Saint Ambrose was brought up. The house has been made into a church and a convent of virgins bearing his name.

5. Liguria was a country whose boundaries on the west, on the side of Gaul, were the river Varus and the Maritime Alps; on the south-east, on the side of Italy, the river Macra; on the north, the river Padus; and on the south, the Ligurian gulf. Thus this country embraced present-day southern France, bordering on Italy, and part of north-western Italy: Nice, Genoa, southern Piedmont and the western part of Parma and Piacenza.

6. Aemilia was a province of Gaul lying between Liguria and Flaminia, roughly in the middle part of present-day northern Italy.

was an Arian and had occupied the episcopal throne after the Orthodox bishop Dionysius, who had died in exile. Great disputes and dissensions arose between the Orthodox and the Arians, for each side wished to raise to the vacant see of Milan a bishop of its own confession. Tumult and unrest persisted among the inhabitants of Milan. When the chief magistrate of Rome, Probus, learned of this, he charged Ambrose with going to Milan and quelling the rebellion that had arisen there, saying to him:

"Go there, and act not as a judge, but as a bishop."[8]

On arriving in Milan, Ambrose entered the church where the election was taking place and, with all the force of his eloquence, began to exhort the people, seeking to bring those in dispute to agreement and peace. Suddenly an infant at the breast, who had not yet learned to speak, cried out from among the people:

"Ambrose is bishop!"

Hearing this, all the people in the church took up the infant's words and began to cry aloud with one voice:

"Ambrose is bishop! Ambrose is bishop!"

Thus, by the action of God's grace, an infant who had not yet reached the age of speech foretold what was to come; and both opposing parties, the Orthodox as well as the Arians, came to peace and agreement, desiring to have Ambrose alone as their bishop, although he had not yet been enlightened by holy Baptism, but was only a catechumen. Hearing the people's cry, Ambrose left the church and, in order to show himself unworthy of so great a rank, sat in the judge's seat and, contrary to his usual practice, began to deal mercilessly with offenders. He did this so that the citizens, seeing his mercilessness, might hate him and refuse to have him as bishop. But the people did not cease crying that they wished to have Ambrose as their bishop. Ambrose refused in every way, declaring that he was a great sinner and had not yet been baptized; but they all answered him:

7. Mediolanum was an ancient city of the so-called Cisalpine Gaul, or present-day northern Italy, a centre of the flourishing of learning and the arts; today it is the principal flourishing city of the Italian region of Lombardy, with a numerous population.

8. These words, as it were, prophetically foreshadowed the later glorious episcopal ministry of Saint Ambrose in that city.

"Let your sin be upon us"—for they knew that holy Baptism cleanses a person from all sins.

In distress, Ambrose returned home and resolved to abandon his office and choose the life of a poor wanderer, as many of the Greek philosophers then did; but he was prevented from carrying out this intention. Then he devised another stratagem to escape the episcopal rank: he ordered dissolute women to be brought openly into his house, so that the inhabitants of Milan, seeing this, might be repelled by him and reject him as a fornicator. But the people declared even more insistently:

"Let your sin be upon us; only accept Baptism and the episcopacy."

Seeing that it was impossible to evade the will of all the people, Ambrose resolved to flee the city. By night, secretly from everyone, he left the city, supposing that he was making his way to another city, Ticinum,[9] and had already traveled far along the road. But when day broke, he found himself at the gates of that same city of Milan, called the Roman Gates. This happened because God, who was preparing Ambrose to be, as it were, a wall for His Catholic Church against its enemies, hindered his flight and by His power turned him back from the path he had chosen. When the citizens of Milan learned of this attempt, they kept watch over Ambrose so that he might not escape; at the same time, they sent a petition to the emperor Valentinian the Elder,[10] asking him to command Ambrose to accept the episcopal rank. The emperor rejoiced that men whom he appointed to secular offices were deemed worthy of election to the great spiritual rank. Probus, the chief magistrate of Rome, also rejoiced, for his prediction had come to pass: when sending Ambrose to Milan, Probus had told him that, in exhorting the people to mutual agreement, he should act not as a judge but as a bishop. While the inhabitants of Milan awaited the return of those sent to the emperor and the imperial reply, Ambrose fled again and hid himself on the estate of a dignitary named Leontius. But when the imperial command arrived, Leontius revealed where Ambrose was staying and

9. Ticinum was an ancient city in Cisalpine Gaul, on the main road from Rome into Gaul; today it is Pavia, a considerable city of northern Italy on the river Ticino, not far from its confluence with the Po.

10. Valentinian I, or the Elder, was emperor of the Western Roman Empire; he reigned from 364 to 375.

brought him to the people in Milan. Thus it was impossible for the man whom God had been pleased to appoint to the rank of bishop to hide anywhere, for He would make him "a city set on a hill" (Mt. 5:14), and a candle upon a candlestick (Mt. 5:15), and appoint him shepherd of His rational sheep. Then Ambrose, having become convinced that it was pleasing to God that he should be bishop, obeyed the emperor's command and the people's desire. He would not, however, receive Baptism from an Arian bishop, but wished to be baptized by an Orthodox one, for he was exceedingly wary of the Arian heresy. After receiving holy Baptism, he passed through all the ecclesiastical degrees in seven days, and on the eighth was elevated to the episcopal rank,[8197] to the inexpressible joy of all the people. The emperor himself was present at his ordination, as Theodoret relates,[11] and joyfully said:

"I thank Thee, Almighty Lord, our Savior, that the man to whom I entrusted the bodily lives of my subjects, Thou hast entrusted with their souls, showing thereby that my judgment of him was just."

A few days later, in a frank conversation with the emperor, St. Ambrose rebuked the improper actions of the city courts. The emperor answered him:

"I have long known the truthful boldness of your speech; therefore I not only did not hinder your election as bishop, but myself furthered it. So correct our errors as the divine law commands, and heal the injustices of our souls."

At the beginning of his episcopacy, Ambrose asked Pope Damasus of Rome[12] to send him, of his own choosing, a prudent man to assist him. The pope sent him the priest Simplicianus. Ambrose honored this priest as a father and followed his counsel.[8200] He entrusted the management of his household affairs to his brother Satyrus,[13] while devot-

11. Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus, was a church historian of the fifth century.

12. Damasus I was Pope of Rome from 366 to 384; he is known in Church history for his zealous labours in defence of Orthodoxy in the struggle against Arianism and other heresies.

13. Satyrus died in the midst of this labour, some say in the year 378, others later (the Roman Church venerates him among the saints on September 17, as well as Ambrose's sister Marcellina on July 17). Ambrose himself, immediately upon ascending the episcopal see, freed himself from all worldly care by a due distribution of his possessions. He gave the silver and gold for the benefit of the poor; the estates were given to the Church, and for his sister he reserved for her lifetime the use of them.

ing himself wholly to the affairs of the Church. Every day he celebrated the divine services and instructed the people in Holy Scripture.[14]

St. Ambrose also took great care to improve the Church's clergy. Living among them, he himself set them an example of how to unite a strict ascetic life with the duties of a shepherd of the Church. He was a man of great temperance, long vigils, and labor; daily he mortified his flesh by fasting, breaking his fast only on Saturdays and Sundays and on the feast days of the most renowned martyrs. He devoted himself to prayer by day and by night, and did not shrink from the labor of writing books with his own hand unless bodily illness kept him from it. Though strict with himself, he was kind, gentle, and accessible to all. The poor found in him a protector and a friend. He rejoiced with those who rejoiced and wept with those who wept. If anyone, having fallen, confessed his sin to him, he wept so bitterly that he moved the sinner also to tears.

Caring for the clergy, St. Ambrose also favored the monks and loved their monastery situated near Milan. He likewise concerned himself with the establishment of women's monasteries, and scarcely three years had passed since his consecration when virgins[15] arrived in Milan from Placentia[16], Bologna[17], and even Mauritania[18].

Some years later, Ambrose went to his native city of Rome. There he found still alive his sister and one maidservant from the household's

14. Having made the Holy Scriptures and the truths of the holy faith his own, both in mind and in heart, Ambrose began with great zeal to preach to the people. He neglected them neither on Sundays nor on feast days, but took every occasion to instruct them, and at times ascended the ambo more than once in a single day. His speech was easy to follow, and his voice was quiet; and therefore in the church, during his sermons, a wonderful stillness reigned. The people, who loved the prefect Ambrose, listened all the more to the words of Bishop Ambrose. He also showed particular zeal in the instruction of the catechumens for holy baptism.

15. In the ancient Church, even before the appearance of women's monastic communities and in their early period, there existed a special class of virgins who devoted themselves wholly to the service of God and took a vow of virginity. Such persons were called virgins (*devstvennitsy*), and they enjoyed great respect in the Church and were considered its adornment. They gathered together for the ascetic labors of silence, contemplation and prayer in private houses, under the direction of experienced elder women in the spiritual life, who served as their teachers. Very often the Church entrusted their guidance and oversight to the most respected of the deaconesses. In the time of St. Ambrose of Milan, communities of virgins were fully developed, and his own sister Marcellina was a virgin, for women's monastic houses had only just begun to arise at that time.

longtime servants; his mother had already died. When they kissed his hand, Ambrose smiled slightly and said to the maidservant:

"There, you are kissing a bishop's hand, just as I once told you I would."

Thus was fulfilled the prediction of Ambrose himself, mentioned earlier, namely that as a child he would extend his right hand to the members of the household and say:

"Kiss it, for I too shall be a bishop."

During Ambrose's stay in Rome, a respected woman who lived across the Tiber[19] asked him to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in her house[20]. Learning of this, another woman, a paralytic, ordered that she be carried there, and while the holy hierarch of God was praying, she touched the hem of his vestment, kissed it, and at once became well. And the report of this miracle spread throughout all of Rome.

After the death of the Emperor Valentinian the Elder, the scepter of the Western Roman Empire passed to his son Gratian[21]. As he prepared for war against the Goths[22], he expressed to St. Ambrose the wish that the saint set forth for him in writing the confession of the holy faith. St. Ambrose wrote for the emperor books[23] on the faith,

17. Bologna was the chief city of an Italian province of the same period. Founded in remote antiquity, it still holds great significance as one of the centers of Italian learning and commerce, owing to its advantageous geographical position on the road from northern to central Italy.

18. Mauretania, now Fez, Morocco, and the western part of Algeria, was a Roman province in north Africa.

16. Placentia, now Piacenza, was a Roman colony in Cisalpine Gaul (present-day northern Italy) on the right bank of the Po, not far from where it flows into the Trebbia. Its importance rested chiefly on the fact that it lay on the road from Mediolanum to Parma.

19. The Tiber, on which the city of Rome stands, rises in the Apennine mountain range in the north-east of the ancient region of Italy known as Etruria.

20. In the time of St. Ambrose of Milan, the celebration of the Liturgy in private houses was still permitted, in accordance with the custom of the Apostolic age. The holy Apostles, as is clear from the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 20:7–8), gathered to celebrate the Eucharist in an upper room. Christians in the times of persecution could not have public churches, but gathered in private houses, in underground caves, the catacombs, and at the graves of martyrs. The church historian Eusebius records the following testimony of St. Dionysius of Alexandria: "During the persecution every place, such as a field, a ship, an inn, or a prison, became for us a house of praise."

21. Gratian, the elder son and successor of the emperor Valentinian I, co-ruled with his father from 367 and reigned from 376 to 388.

22. The Goths were a numerous people of the Germanic tribe, dwelling beyond the Danube, and divided into the Ostrogoths (eastern) and the Visigoths (western).

foretold him victory over his enemies, and blessed his banners, on which the name of Christ was inscribed. And Gratian won a glorious victory over the Goths through the prayers of the servant of God and his blessing.

The wife of the deceased Valentinian the Elder, Gratian's stepmother Justina, was an Arian; she hated St. Ambrose and did him harm. Thus, when a bishop died in Sirmium[24], Justina went there, wishing to raise to the episcopal throne a man of her own confession, an Arian. St. Ambrose also came there, for that city belonged to his flock. Disregarding the wrath of the woman, he labored that a pious man named Anemius be elected bishop. One day, when everyone had gathered in the church and St. Ambrose had taken his place on the ambo, the Empress Justina, who was present there, sent an Arian woman, having instructed her to seize the bishop by his garment, thrust him from his place, and drag him to where the women stood, so that they might beat Ambrose with their women's hands and drive him out of the church. But when this shameless woman approached St. Ambrose boldly to carry out what she had been bidden, the saint said to her:

"Although I am unworthy of the rank I bear, nevertheless you ought not to raise your hand against any of God's priests; fear the Judgment of God, lest an unexpected calamity befall you."

These words of St. Ambrose were indeed fulfilled upon that bold woman: the next morning she suddenly died, and St. Ambrose himself buried her, returning good for evil. Terrified by this miracle, the Arians and the Empress Justina no longer dared to hinder St. Ambrose from consecrating as bishop the man who was held in honor. Thus Ambrose, without opposition, consecrated as bishop the very man he desired, after which he returned to Milan.

It happened once that two other Arians, chamberlains of the Emperor Gratian, expressed the wish to hold a public debate on questions of faith with St. Ambrose; the subject of the debate was to be the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the appointed time St. Ambrose

23. The work of St. Ambrose of Milan, *On the Faith*, consisted of five books.

24. Sirmium was an ancient chief city in Lower Pannonia, on the river Sava, a tributary of the Dnieper, in present-day Illyria.[1*]

waited with the people in the church. He was ready to dispute with them, for he had within him the Spirit of God. But the said Arians, through their pride and from a desire to insult the saint, did not come to the disputation, but instead mounted their horses and rode out of the city into the fields. When they reached an elevated place, their horses suddenly took fright, and the Arians, falling from the hill, were killed. St. Ambrose, knowing nothing of this incident, waited for them a long time, and finally, seeing that they did not appear, ascended the ambo and delivered to the people his well-known discourse, beginning with the words: "I strive, brethren, to wait for what is due, but I do not find my debtors of yesterday" (and so on, as it stands in the work of St. Ambrose on the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ).

Soon after this, Gratian was treacherously slain in Gaul by the military commander Maximus[25], who had rebelled against him. The imperial throne in Rome was then occupied by Valentinian the Younger together with his mother Justina; but since the commander Maximus had already seized Spain and Gaul, it was impossible to resist him. Therefore the Arian Justina was compelled to turn to St. Ambrose, asking him to go to Maximus to beg for mercy and to obtain peace for her young son. The good shepherd set out to the rebel, for he was ready to lay down his life for his rational sheep.

By his wise and humble words Ambrose so persuaded Maximus that the latter did not move against Italy that year, but remained in Gaul.

But Justina repaid the servant of God for this labor with ingratitude: never ceasing to be hostile toward him, she sent Ambrose a demand, in the name of her son, that he surrender to the Arians the cathedral church of Milan together with all the treasures within it. But St. Ambrose courageously opposed the imperial command. He answered:

"In what belongs to me I do not refuse the emperor; I am ready to sacrifice even my health for him, but what belongs to God I cannot give, and the emperor may not take it."

After this, at Justina's order, issued in the emperor's name, a detachment of soldiers was sent, who were commanded to seize the

church by force and drive the bishop out of it. The people, hearing of this, gathered at the church, shut themselves inside it together with their holy bishop Ambrose, and did not admit the soldiers. For three days the faithful remained shut up in the church, singing and glorifying God. They stoutly resisted the Arians and did not allow them to expel the bishop and take the church. And St. Ambrose, answering the messengers sent by the emperor, repeated:

"I will not go out of the church of my own will, nor will I abandon it, nor will I treacherously hand over the flock of Christ's sheep to the wolves, nor will I permit those who utter blasphemies against God to take possession of the Church of God. If it is permitted to kill me, let me be here, within the walls of the church, pierced by a sword or a spear: I am ready to accept such a death gladly and with love."

When the Empress Justina was informed of all this, she was ashamed, and at the same time frightened by the courageous resistance of the Orthodox, and she no longer dared openly to stir up strife against the Church. But, ashamed of her defeat, she secretly sent a hired assassin to the house of Ambrose to put the hierarch to death. The villain entered the bishop's bedchamber with a drawn sword and had already raised his hand to strike the holy man with the sword, when suddenly his hand withered, so that he could not lower it. He was seized, and he confessed by whom and for what purpose he had been sent. St. Ambrose, in his guilelessness, healed the withered hand and released him in peace[8214].

At this time[26] God revealed in a vision to His servant Ambrose the relics of the holy martyrs Protasius and Gervasius, which lay buried in the earth. When these holy relics were dug up, many miracles issued from them. Thus a blind man named Severus, as soon as he touched the garments of the martyrs, at once received his sight; also many unclean spirits were cast out of people possessed by them.

Meanwhile in the imperial palace many Arians, together with the Empress Justina, mocked and derided the grace of God, bestowed by our Lord Jesus Christ upon the holy Church in the glorification of His

25. This was in the year 383.
26. In the same year, 386.

martyrs. The Arians declared that Ambrose was hiring people for money to pretend to be demoniacs, bringing them to the tomb of the martyrs and making a show as if these supposed demoniacs were healed, and then spreading abroad among the people the fame of such false miracles.

While these courtiers were holding such impious conversations among themselves, suddenly, by the permission of God, a demon fell upon one of them and began to torment him. The tormented man uttered terrible cries and shouted:

"Let the same befall all who revile the holy martyrs, as has befallen me, and all who do not believe in the Trinitarian Unity, which Ambrose teaches us to believe!"

All who were present were struck with terror, but instead of repenting and believing, they seized the tormented man and drowned him, casting him into a lake. Another time it happened that a certain one of these impious Arians entered the church while the holy bishop Ambrose was teaching the people in it. And this Arian saw that an Angel of God was whispering something into Ambrose's ear. By this vision it was made manifest that the holy bishop was proclaiming to the people words inspired in him by the Angel. Seeing this, the Arian at once joined the Orthodox faith and, by the grace of almighty God, became a defender of that faith which he had previously persecuted.

Meanwhile, Empress Justina did not cease to be hostile toward the Hierarch, and, in her efforts to destroy him, found an accomplice in one of the nobles, named Euthymius. She persuaded him, bribing him with gifts, to seize Ambrose secretly and carry him away into exile in some distant country. Seeking to carry out the empress's wish, Euthymius built himself a house near the church, so that it might be easier for him to choose a fitting moment and seize the saint of God. He prepared a special carriage in which he intended to convey St. Ambrose into exile; but by the judgment of God, "his mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violence shall come down upon his own pate" (Ps. 7:17).

On the very day that Euthymius intended to seize St. Ambrose, an imperial order unexpectedly arrived that Euthymius was to be sent into exile without delay. And he was carried into exile in that very carriage

which he, the impious man, had prepared for the exile of the Hierarch Ambrose.

When the rebel Maximus again began his military campaign against Italy, Justina hastened to make peace with Ambrose and, together with her son, began to beseech him to go once more and plead with the rebel. Bearing no grudge, St. Ambrose went to Maximus, but this time his intercession before that callous and proud rebel had no success. Seeing his inflexibility, St. Ambrose showed such boldness that, before them all, he pronounced a curse upon him as the murderer who by treachery had destroyed his innocent sovereign, and excommunicated him from the Holy Church. Maximus invaded Italy and took city after city. The young emperor could not resist him, and fled with his mother to Thessalonica[27] in Greece, to the Eastern Emperor, Theodosius the Great[28], to ask his help. Theodosius assembled an army, marched against Maximus, and defeated him. Maximus was slain[29]; his death was vengeance for the innocent blood of Emperor Gratian. Empress Justina, however, was not destined to await this happy victory, for she died soon after arriving in Greece. Her son Valentinian heeded the exhortations of Emperor Theodosius and joined the Orthodox faith.

After Justina's death, it happened once that a sorcerer was brought to trial and tortured. During the torture he cried out that the guardian Angel of St. Ambrose tormented him more than the executioners themselves. When asked for what crime the Angel was punishing him, the sorcerer confessed the following:

"While Empress Justina was alive, I intended by my sorcery to stir up the people of Mediolanum against the bishop of that city, Ambrose. For this purpose, at midnight I climbed upon the roof of the church and there offered sacrifices to demons. Yet the more I strove, by means of evil schemes, to make Ambrose hateful to the people, the more the

27. Thessalonica, or Solun, was a considerable ancient city of Macedonia by the Gulf of Thessalonica, or the great Thermaic Gulf. Thessalonica was the center of the Christian community founded by the holy Apostle Paul. Now called Salonica, it is, after Constantinople, the first commercial city of European Turkey, with a very numerous population.

28. Theodosius the Great was emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, who later also brought the western under his rule. He reigned from 379 to 395.

29. In the year 388.

people's love and devotion to their shepherd increased before my eyes, and the more that flock advanced in the Orthodox Catholic faith. Seeing my efforts come to nothing, I began sending demons to Ambrose's house to kill him; but the evil spirits told me that they could approach neither the bishop nor even the doors of his house, for fire issued from them and scorched them."

This is what the sorcerer declared under torture, for Ambrose was truly terrible to the demons. Thus, once some people brought a boy possessed by an unclean spirit to St. Ambrose; before they had reached Mediolanum, the evil spirit came out of the demoniac, and the boy came to the bishop of God healed. The boy remained with St. Ambrose for quite some time. Then he departed from Mediolanum, making his way to his homeland, and there, in the very place where the demon had first left him, the wily enemy attacked the boy again and began to torment him. When the exorcists[30] asked the evil spirit why he had not tormented the boy in Mediolanum, the demon answered:

"I feared Ambrose, and so, before reaching Mediolanum, I fled from the boy and waited for him in the very place where I had left him; when I saw him returning, I entered into him again."

After the death of the rebel Maximus, Emperor Theodosius arrived in Mediolanum; the Hierarch Ambrose was then in Aquileia[31]. And the following event took place. In one of the cities of the East, Christians had burned down a Jewish synagogue because the Jews had insulted monks. When the governor of the East informed the emperor of this, he immediately commanded that the bishop of that city build a new synagogue for the Jews. St. Ambrose, learning of this command, sent the emperor a letter (for he could not go to him in person at once); in it he

30. In the most ancient Christian Church there existed a special lower clerical office of exorcists. This duty of casting out evil spirits from the possessed was entrusted to the lower clergy, with the aim of showing the contempt of the Church of Christ for the vain power of the devil. The exorcists were also required to pronounce prohibitive or exorcising prayers over the catechumens, that is, those preparing to receive the sacrament of holy baptism. Today these exorcising prayers that precede the sacrament of holy baptism are read by the priest who performs the baptism. In the Trebnik of Peter Mogila there is a special service for the expulsion of unclean spirits from the possessed.

31. Aquileia was a considerable commercial city on the river Natisone, not far from the shore of the Adriatic Sea.

proved to the emperor the injustice of his decree and asked him to revoke it and not deliver Christians up to the Jews for mockery. But Theodosius paid no heed to Ambrose's letter. Then the bishop of God, having returned to Mediolanum, publicly rebuked the emperor in church during his sermon. Turning to him, Ambrose said to him in the name of God:

"I brought you forth from insignificance and made you emperor. I delivered your enemy into your hands and subjected all his forces to you. I bestowed the imperial throne upon your descendants. I granted that you should win victory without difficulty, yet you give My enemies occasion to triumph over Me."

Emperor Theodosius, moved by these words, changed his decision and revoked the command that Christians restore the Jewish synagogue.

At the same time another event took place: the people of Thessalonica revolted against their governor, Botherich[32], and killed him. The emperor, in great anger, sent an army to that city, and as many as seven thousand of its inhabitants were then killed. Many innocent people perished by the sword, for when the soldiers attacked the city, they did not seek out those guilty of the governor's murder, but killed everyone in the streets, old and young, even infants.

When Ambrose heard of this, he was greatly grieved and was righteously angered with the emperor for such senseless bloodshed. And one feast day, as the emperor was proceeding solemnly to church, the bishop of God fearlessly went out to meet him, barred his entrance to the church, and rebuked him for the unjust slaughter in these words:

"It is not fitting for you, emperor, to approach Holy Communion with the faithful Christians after becoming responsible for such killings and making no repentance for them. How, then, will you receive the Body of Christ with hands[33] stained with innocent blood, or drink the

32. Botherich was the governor of Thessalonica, a friend of the emperor Theodosius the Great.
33. At that time the laity, when they partook of the holy Mysteries of Christ, also received the Body of Christ into their hands. See the Life of Venerable Theoktista of Lesbos under November 9.

Blood of the Lord with the lips that gave the command for the cruel slaughter of men?"

"David also sinned," the emperor replied to him; "he committed murder and adultery, and yet was not deprived of the mercy of God."

But the Hierarch answered Theodosius:

"If you have imitated David in his sins, then imitate him also in his repentance."

The emperor returned to his palace in distress, grieving over his sin. Soon he performed the penance imposed upon him by the Hierarch Ambrose: he repented openly, like a common man, prostrated himself before the church, and stood with the other penitents, shedding abundant tears. Meanwhile the feast of the Nativity of Christ arrived, and Theodosius sat in tears in the palace, reflecting that God's temple was open to servants and beggars, yet even at such a time it was inaccessible to him. A certain Rufinus, a minister who enjoyed the emperor's special favor, learned the cause of his tears and ran to St. Ambrose to persuade him to lift the penance from the emperor. Theodosius himself followed him to the church. At first the Hierarch received him sternly and, knowing his irritable nature, required him to issue a law by which court sentences involving the taking of life or property would be confirmed only after 30 days. The emperor consented, and was admitted to the church. There he showed signs of deep repentance: he tore at his hair with his hands, struck his forehead, and drenched the pavement with streams of tears. After this, Ambrose at last allowed the emperor to receive Holy Communion. The emperor began to enter the sanctuary, for he thought to receive Communion together with the clergy; but St. Ambrose sent the archdeacon to him with an order to await Communion before the sanctuary, along with the other laypeople. "For," said the Hierarch, "the purple confers only imperial, not priestly dignity." The emperor humbly obeyed the bishop's command and came out of the sanctuary. "In Constantinople it is the custom," he remarked, "for emperors to receive Communion with the priests in the sanctuary." But after this Theodosius waited in the church with the rest of the people until the time for Communion. Later, when Emperor Theodosius was already in Constantinople, he did not enter the sanctuary to receive

Communion. When Patriarch Nectarius[34] asked why, contrary to imperial custom, he had waited for Communion outside the sanctuary with the common people, he replied with a sigh:

"I did not know the difference between an emperor and a bishop, but now I know, having learned from the teacher of truth, Ambrose, who alone deserves to be called a bishop."

The fame of Bishop Ambrose spread everywhere. Thus two very learned sages came to Milan from Persia. Having heard much of the wisdom of St. Ambrose, they wished to test it for themselves and therefore prepared many questions which they proposed to him for resolution. They conversed with him at length and marveled at the depth of his theological teaching and the height of his mind. They bore witness before the emperor that it was for Ambrose alone that they had undertaken so distant a journey from the East to the West, since they desired to see him and to enjoy his wisdom.

After the Emperor Theodosius returned from Italy to Constantinople, and Valentinian the Younger was suddenly put to death in the city of Vienne at the instigation of the commander of his bodyguard, Arbogast,[35] Eugenius[36] was raised to the imperial throne. He bore the name of a Christian only, while in his inner inclinations he was an idol-worshipper and a lover of pagan superstitions and sorcery. Desiring to please the Roman authorities (and in Rome there were still many idolaters and servants of demons), he commanded that the temples of the idols be opened and that demonic sacrifices be offered. When he drew near to Milan, St. Ambrose, not wishing to see such an emperor, who hypocritically passed himself off as a Christian while in reality he was an immoral impious man, withdrew from Milan to Bononia,[37] and then to Florence, which lies in Tuscia.[38] It was not the malice of the unrighteous ruler that he feared, but he disdained meeting with

34. St. Nectarius was Patriarch of Constantinople from 381 to 397.

35. Vienna, now Vienne, was an ancient Roman colony and afterwards the capital of various states founded by Germanic tribes; it lies on the left bank of the Rhône. At present the city is rich in remains of Roman antiquities.

36. Eugenius, of humble origin, was secretary to the emperor Valentinian II, and after Valentinian's murder he was raised to the throne by Arbogast. But Theodosius the Great marched with his army against Arbogast, defeated him, and ordered Eugenius to be executed.

him. Fearlessly he wrote to him, admonished him and threatened him with the Judgment of God; yet he did not succeed in bringing to conscience Eugenius, who was insensible of heart. In Florence the servant of God remained for some time and lived in the house of a pious and orthodox man named Decentius, whose son, a young boy named Pansophius, was tormented by an unclean spirit. St. Ambrose healed the boy by prayer and the laying on of hands. After some days, the boy suddenly fell ill and died; his mother, a pious woman, full of faith and the fear of God, carried her son into Ambrose's room, and since the bishop was not there, she laid her child on his bed and left. St. Ambrose, returning to the room which he occupied, saw that the dead boy was lying on his bed. Then he closed the doors behind him and fell to prayer, and then, like the prophet Elisha (4 Kgdms. 4:32–35), he approached the bed, bent over the boy and breathed upon him. The boy rose again, and Ambrose gave him back alive to his mother.

Meanwhile Eugenius set out from Milan on a campaign against the Emperor Theodosius. As he left the city, the impious Eugenius boasted that when he returned with victory he would turn the Milanese church into a stable and gird the clergy with swords. However, that extraordinary malice which breathed in these threats was destined to remain powerless: Eugenius perished ingloriously in battle, defeated by the Emperor Theodosius. The Hierarch of God solemnly met the pious Emperor Theodosius as a conqueror, but Theodosius, falling at the feet of St. Ambrose, ascribed his victory to his prayers.

A little time later, the Emperor Theodosius peacefully died;[39] he had reigned in a God-pleasing manner and passed into the everlasting Kingdom of Christ, while the earthly kingdom was received after him by his sons: Arcadius[40] in the East and Honorius[41] in the West. During the

37. Bononia was a very well-known city in upper Italy, in Cisalpine Gaul, on the so-called Aemilian Way; now Bologna, the chief city of the Italian province of the same name, known for its learning and extensive commerce, with a very numerous population.

38. Tuscia, otherwise Etruria, was an ancient region of central Italy, to the west and north of Rome, bounded by the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Apennine mountains. Florence, on the river Arno, is a populous city of Italy, renowned for its development of the sciences and arts.

39. In 395. St. Ambrose honored the memory of Theodosius the Great with a discourse.

40. Arcadius was emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire and reigned from 390 to 408.

41. Honorius was emperor of the Western Roman Empire and reigned from 390 to 423.

reign of Honorius the relics of the holy martyrs Nazarius and Celsus were uncovered by St. Ambrose, concerning which the presbyter Paulinus relates the following.

At that time Ambrose transferred to the Church of the Holy Apostles the relics of the holy martyr Nazarius, which had been found in a suburban garden. We saw in the tomb where the martyr's relics lay blood, as though it had only just flowed out; the head with hair and beard had been preserved in such incorruption, as though it had just been laid in the tomb, and the face of the martyr was so bright, as though it had just been washed. And what is marvelous in this, when the Lord Himself in His Gospel gave such a promise: "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Lk. 12:7). We also perceived such a fragrance as surpassed all aromas. After the transfer of the relics of the holy martyr Nazarius onto the chariot, we immediately went with St. Ambrose to the relics of the holy martyr Celsus, which lay in the same locality. From the owners of this garden we learned that they had been charged by their ancestors not to leave this place, but to keep it from generation to generation, since great treasures were laid here. And truly great are these treasures, which neither moth nor rust consumes, and where thieves do not dig through nor steal (Mt. 6:20). Their keeper is the Lord, and the place for those for whom life is Christ and death is gain (Phil. 1:21) is the dwelling in heaven. When the relics of the holy martyrs were brought into the Church of the Apostles, St. Ambrose delivered a discourse to the people. At this time someone from the people, who had an unclean spirit in him, cried out loudly:

"Ambrose is tormenting me!"

But the saint, turning toward him, said:

"Be silent, devil! It is not Ambrose but the faith of the martyrs that torments you, as well as your envy, since you see that people are ascending to where you have been cast down from. Ambrose, however, does not know how to be puffed up with pride."

After these words of St. Ambrose, the demon fell silent, casting the man possessed by him down prostrate upon the ground.

The report of St. Ambrose reached the queen of the Marcomanni,[42] Fritigilda, and she sent to ask the saint that Ambrose might teach her the faith in Christ. Ambrose wrote her a detailed instruction in the Christian faith and persuaded her of the truth of Christianity. Fritigilda converted her husband also to faith in Christ, and persuaded him to conclude a peace treaty with the Roman Empire. Fritigilda greatly desired to see her teacher, St. Ambrose, and with this intention she afterwards set out for Milan, but she no longer found the hierarch alive, for he had departed to the Lord shortly before.

St. Ambrose was a man of great abstinence and diligence, full of spiritual vigor; he fasted constantly, except on Saturdays, Sundays and festal days and the days of commemoration of the martyrs. He remained in unceasing prayer both by day and by night; he occupied himself with affairs diligently and even wrote books with his own hand, when he was not hindered from this by bodily illness. He was full of solicitous care for all the churches of his diocese, and he labored so greatly to fulfill the duties laid upon him by God that after his death five bishops could scarcely cope with this work. Nor can his solicitude for the poor, the needy and those in captivity be described in any way: he spent on them all his last means. Immediately after accepting the episcopal rank, Ambrose distributed all the gold, silver and remaining property that belonged to him for the adornment of the churches of God, for the feeding of the poor and orphans and for the ransoming of captives; only a small part of his substance he set aside for the maintenance of his sister, and for himself he kept nothing, so that, freed from all property, he might more easily follow Christ the Lord, who for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9). The servant of God Ambrose "became all things to all men" (1 Cor. 9:22), rejoicing with those who rejoiced, weeping with those who wept. If anyone came to him to confess his sins, Ambrose himself wept over him so much that he brought even a sinner hardened of heart to contrition and stirred him to compunction and tears.

42. The Marcomanni were a Germanic tribe dwelling in Bohemia, who often made devastating raids on the border provinces of the Roman Empire.

When St. Ambrose reached advanced age, he foreknew his departure to God and said to his clergy:

"I shall remain with you only until Pascha."

The aforementioned presbyter Paulinus, who described the life of St. Ambrose, also relates the following event, of which he himself was an eyewitness. "Shortly before his illness, St. Ambrose was occupied with an interpretation of the 43rd Psalm, and I," says Paulinus, "wrote down from his words what he explained, since Ambrose himself, because of his age and weakness, could no longer write much. Suddenly, looking at him, I saw a fire like a shield around his head; this fire, gradually coiling, entered his mouth; then Ambrose's face became white, like snow. This vision brought me into such terror that for fear I could not write, but afterwards Ambrose's face returned to its usual appearance. I reported this to the reverend deacon Castulus, and he, himself full of the grace of God, explained to me that what I had seen was the Holy Spirit descending in the form of fire upon our bishop, as once He descended upon the holy Apostles."

The commander Stilicho,[43] hearing that Ambrose was mortally ill, exclaimed:

"Italy will perish if this hierarch dies!"

And he sent to the sick hierarch honored citizens of Milan, such as he knew were loved by St. Ambrose, so that they might entreat the saint to ask the Lord for an extension of earthly life for the benefit of others. Ambrose answered:

"I have not so lived among you as to be ashamed to live on; but I do not fear death either, for we have the All-good Lord."

While Ambrose lay on his sickbed, at some distance from his bed, at the door of the room, the deacons Castulus, Polemius, Venerius and Felix were sitting. They were conversing among themselves, but they spoke in whispers and so quietly that their talk could be heard only by themselves. They were discussing who should be bishop after Ambrose,

43. Stilicho was the famous commander of the Western Roman Empire at the court of Honorius, who several times saved it from falling. A Vandal by birth, he was later, despite his services to the state, put to death by Honorius's order, through court intrigue, on the pretended charge of treason.

and in this connection they mentioned the presbyter Simplicianus. Suddenly St. Ambrose, who was lying far from them, raised his voice and three times, as if taking part in their conversation, repeated: "He is old, but vigorous." By these words he designated that the presbyter Simplicianus should take upon himself the episcopate after his death.

During his illness St. Ambrose, while in prayer, saw our Lord Jesus Christ coming to him with a loving smile, revealing to him His Divine countenance; Ambrose told of this to Vassian, Bishop of Lodi[44], who was then sitting beside him. When the time drew near for the separation of St. Ambrose's soul from his body, Honoratus, Bishop of the church of Vercelli[45], who was resting in the upper part of the house, heard three times a voice from on high, which said to him:

"Rise quickly and hasten to Ambrose, for he is about to depart now."

Then the presbyter rose, took with him the most pure Mysteries, and went down to the sick man. St. Ambrose prayed, received the Divine Gifts, and at dawn on the day of holy Pascha[8235] committed his holy soul into the hands of his Lord. His holy body was laid in the great church of Milan, and his soul stood with the Angels before the throne of the Holy Trinity, of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, to whom be glory forever, amen.

Kontakion, Tone 3:

Shining forth with divine dogmas, thou didst confound the delusion of Arius, O sacred Mystagogue and Shepherd Ambrose; and working miracles by the power of the Spirit, thou didst manifestly heal diverse passions. O Venerable Father, entreat Christ God that our souls be saved.

* * *

44. The Laudenses were a people in northern Italy, between Mediolanum and Cremona. Now Lodi Vecchio.

45. Vercellae was a city not far west of Mediolanum.

Life of the Venerable Nilus of Stolobna, Wonderworker of Novgorod

Житие преподобного Нила Столобенского, Новгородского чудотворца

The Venerable Nilus was born in a village of the Novgorod region, in the Derevskaya Pyatina[46], Zhabensky churchyard[47]. Who his parents were is unknown; it is known only that he was tonsured in one of the monasteries of the Pskov region, called "Krypetz"[48]. From this monastery he went off into the wilderness in the Rzhev district and settled there near the river Cheremkha[49]. He fed on herbs and acorns from the oak, passing his time in fasting and prayer. The devil could not endure this, and therefore armed himself with great malice against the saint, in order to drive him from that place. The devil terrified Nilus with various apparitions, appearing before him in the form of beasts and all manner of reptiles, which rushed at the Venerable with wild whistling and shrieking. But the saint, by his prayers, as with a sword, drove away all these temptations and the evil snares of the enemy, guarding his body with the sign of the Cross and praying unceasingly to God. Nilus led such a life for thirteen years, passing his time in many ascetic labors and struggles of the desert.

Once, after long prayer, Nilus fell asleep and heard a voice commanding him:

"Nilus! Go out from here and go to the island of Stolobna; there thou mayest be saved."

Having received this command, the Venerable was filled with great joy, for he saw that the Lord had not spurned his prayers. Nilus began to inquire of the Christ-loving people who came to him about the island. They told him that the island lies in Lake Seliger, seven versts from the

46. *Pyatiny* – so were called the five parts into which the Novgorod region was divided. They bore the names: Votskaya, Shelonskaya, Obonezhskaya, Derevskaya and Bezhetskaya.

47. What is now in the Valdai district, Novgorod province. This churchyard is still today located in the Novgorod district; in memory, however, of the fact that Venerable Nilus was a native of this churchyard, there is still today a side-chapel in his name in it.

48. This monastery has been abolished; in its place there is now a churchyard called "Rozhek."

49. The river Cheremkha, or Seremkha, is located in the Valdai district and belongs to the Hermitage of Nilus. To this day his chapel and cell, surrounded by a group of centuries-old trees, remain a monument to the sojourn of Venerable Nilus on the river Cheremkha, forming an object of reverent esteem for the neighboring inhabitants.

town of Ostashkov, in the Tver province. The Venerable set out there, reached the island, and was joyfully struck by its beauty. Walking around the whole island, Nilus saw that it was very suitable for solitude, and therefore he rejoiced in spirit and was glad. On the island there was a hill and a large forest. Ascending the hill, Nilus made a prayer and said:

"Here is my rest; here I shall dwell forever and ever."

And he gave thanks to God for showing him this place. Here he dug himself a cave in the hillside, in which he lived the first winter; afterwards he built there a cell and a chapel. Nilus passed his life on the island in great ascetic labors and prayers, in fasting and toil; his food was the grains and berries that grew on the island, as well as vegetables and fruits from the earth which he cultivated with his own hands. But the devil did not cease to arm himself against the saint here too, and terrified him with every kind of apparition. Thus once the devil appeared with a whole host of demons and surrounded the Venerable's cell while he was making his prayer in it; encircling the cell with ropes, the devil threatened with frenzied cries to drag it into the lake, but by his prayer the saint drove off the demonic host.

The hatred of people against St. Nilus also proved powerless, and only served to bring about his greater glorification. Once the impious inhabitants living near the island of Stolobna resolved to drive the saint from the island, and to this end they cut wood and set the forest on fire, thinking that the fire would reach his cell and burn it. Seeing this, the saint stood in prayer and with many tears prayed for deliverance from the calamity. The merciful Lord did not forsake the supplication of His servant, who trusted in Him, and preserved him by His grace: the flame suddenly died down as soon as it reached the hill. The Venerable, seeing God's swift mercy, rejoiced in spirit, and his enemies returned home in shame.

Once, when the Venerable was at work outside his cell, robbers attacked the saint and demanded threateningly that he give them his treasure; but the saint said to them:

"All my treasure is in the corner of the cell; go in and take it."

In that corner there was an icon of the Mother of God with the Eternal Infant. The robbers entered the cell and were suddenly blinded; then they began to implore the saint with tears for forgiveness; the Venerable prayed to God and the robbers regained their sight. After this the saint admonished them concerning the salvation of their souls and forbade them to tell anyone what had happened to them; they kept silent then, but after the death of St. Nilus they told all.

For his ascetic labors and patient endurance of afflictions, the Venerable Nilus received the gift of perceiving the hidden deeds of men and of guiding sinners onto the path of truth.

A man came to the saint while in a state of carnal impurity. The saint rebuked him for that sin and, bidding him not to commit it, dismissed him in peace. From that time the man came to the fear of God, and having lived piously, he died.

God-fearing inhabitants who engaged in fishing near the island, honoring the saint, sent him fish from their catch for his sustenance. Once they sent one of their comrades to him with fish. The saint, foreseeing in spirit that the fisherman had defiled himself by adultery, closed the little window of the cell before him and did not accept the fish from him. The fisherman, returning to his comrades, told them what had happened. They sent another to the Venerable with fish, and the Venerable joyfully accepted the fish from him and, blessing him, dismissed him.

At another time a man wanted to cut timber on the island for building a house, but suddenly a terrible thunder crashed and a voice was heard forbidding the cutting of the wood. Yet the man was not afraid of this and began to load the trees onto a cart, but the horse could not move it from the spot. Seeing this miracle, the man went away in fear, promising never again to do such a thing.

The Venerable labored on the island of Stolobna for twenty-seven years, and before his death he dug with his own hands a place for burial in the earth (in the chapel) and set a coffin there. Coming there every day, he wept over that coffin, saying to himself:

"Behold my rest, behold my dwelling!"

When at last the saint felt the approach of his death, he prayed the Lord to vouchsafe him the reception of the Holy Mysteries. In answer to the saint's prayer, his desire was fulfilled. The abbot of the Nikolsky monastery, Sergius, came to the island and gave Nilus the Holy Mysteries. After this the Venerable, entering his cell, performed the customary prayers and, taking the censer, censed the holy icons and the whole cell; then, leaning with his hands on the wooden crutches on which he was accustomed to rest from bodily weariness[50], he reposed in the Lord in the year 1554, on the seventh day of December[51].

To our God be glory, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Troparion, Tone 4:

As a light shining with all brightness hast thou appeared on the island of Lake Seliger, Venerable Father Nilus; for from thy youth thou didst take up the Cross of Christ upon thy shoulder and zealously followed Him, drawing near to God by purity, whence thou wast enriched with the gift of wonders. Therefore we also, coming to the reliquary of thy relics, tenderly cry out: O Venerable Father, entreat Christ God that our souls be saved.

Kontakion, Tone 8:

Withdrawing from thy homeland, O Venerable, thou didst dwell in the wilderness, and ascending to the island of Lake Seliger, thou didst show a strict life, and astonishing many by thy virtues, thou didst receive from Christ the gift of wonders. Remember us who honor thy memory, that we may cry to thee: Rejoice, Nilus, our Father.

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50. These "hooks" or crutches were driven into the walls of the cell of Venerable Nilus; they served him in place of chairs; leaning on them he enjoyed a brief rest.

51. On the site of the ascetic labors of Venerable Nilus, in 1594, the Stolobensky Monastery of Nilus was founded by the hieromonk German. – The uncovering of the relics of Venerable Nilus took place on May 27, 1667, which day was also established to be celebrated annually. Now the holy relics of the Venerable rest in a silver reliquary. With the relics of the Venerable are kept: his cell icon, the Vladimir (so-called Seliger) Icon of the Mother of God, and also his schema, known for miracles, which lay in the earth for 112 years. On the 27th day of May, the day of the opening of the relics, each year a cross procession takes place from the town of Ostashkov to the Hermitage of Nilus, with a numerous gathering of people.

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Commemoration of the Holy Martyr Athenodorus

Память святого мученика Афинодора

Holy Martyr Athenodorus, from Syrian Mesopotamia[52], lived the monastic life from his youth. Through an informer he was seized and brought before Eleusius, the ruler of the land, before whom he confessed Christ; for this he was at once condemned to cruel torments. He was stretched between two pillars, and all the members of his body were scorched with burning candles. Red-hot iron was placed under his armpits, and his nostrils were pierced with sharpened spikes. Then he was laid upon a heated copper plate, which, by a wondrous act, grew cool. Afterward he was cast into a red-hot brazen bull and subjected to many other tortures, but the holy martyr remained unharmed, being delivered by the intercession of the Angels. Such wondrous manifestations moved even the unbelievers to turn to the divine Faith: Saint Athenodorus first brought to Christ fifty pagans, and then thirty more. For this he was condemned to beheading by the sword. But as soon as the executioner approached his task, he stumbled and fell as one dead, and his sword-arm was severed from his shoulder. After that no one dared to draw near to the saint, and he, after prayer, yielded up his spirit to the Lord God[53].

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Memory of the Venerable Paul Povinnik[54]

Память преподобного Павла Повинника

The parents of the Venerable Paul were of sufficient means, and from his earliest childhood they carefully taught their son the Holy Scripture. When the saint came of age, he felt a desire to leave the worldly life. And so he entered one of the monastic communit-

52. Syrian Mesopotamia – the Land between the Rivers – a vast country between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, from Armenia, Palestine and Phoenicia to the Persian Gulf.
53. Around the year 304.
54. "Povinnik" means the same as "obedient" – a name given to Venerable Paul for his profound humility and complete renunciation of his own will.

ies of his city, where he received the holy Angelic rank and, labouring in all the virtues, attained such perfection that he surpassed all the brethren of his monastery and became a treasury of virtues, so that he received the gift of working great and wondrous signs.

Once the Venerable Paul, together with other brethren, was boiling pitch in the forge. When the pitch had melted and come to the boil, it began to bubble and spill over the edges of the cauldron. The blessed one, having nothing near him with which to stir the boiling pitch, bared his arm, thrust it into the cauldron and stirred the pitch, and at once the bubbling ceased. The saint's arm remained whole and unharmed, and he himself did not change countenance and suffered nothing. Seeing this, the brethren were struck with awe; some acknowledged him as a God-bearing man, while others regarded it with great mistrust. Paul himself considered himself dust and ashes and called himself a stinking dog. After some time he was assigned another obedience. At this time the abbot of the monastery gathered the brethren and spent many days with them in prayer and fasting. After this they cried out to God:

“Lord, though we are unworthy of this, reveal to us, so far as is possible for our instruction, what our brother Paul is. To what measure of spiritual perfection has he attained, and what has he been deemed worthy to receive?”

God, who fulfils the desire of those who fear Him, granted their petition. One night, during sleep, at God’s bidding the brethren were caught up into a paradise filled with beauty. While they were marvelling at this most glorious wonder, suddenly the monk Paul appeared before them there. The brethren greeted him and asked him to explain the meaning of this appearance. Paul answered with great humility:

"What you see is the paradise of God, and all this has happened for you, brethren, for in your fervent prayers you desired to reach this place, whither I too have come. Take from here for yourselves whatever each one wishes, whatever pleases and is desired by each, and go in peace; and to the work to which I was appointed in the monastery, appoint another, for you will no longer see me."

Having taken leave of Paul, the brethren departed, taking with them from the holy paradise, one a flower, another a little branch, another beautiful foliage, another grass.

Awakening from sleep and gathering together, the brethren told one another the vision and joyfully glorified God; one showed a flower taken from paradise, another said, "And I have taken a palm branch," another reported an unearthly fragrance, another held in his hands beautiful foliage; and all gave praise to God.

After this the blessed Paul went to Jerusalem; having visited the holy places there and prayed, he set out from there for the island of Cyprus. There he climbed a high mountain and for many years laboured spiritually, living in solitude. And since the report of his holy life spread through that region, and many began to come to him, he withdrew from there and settled in the Byzantine lands. Living a God-pleasing life here, he was granted to hear, as in ancient times the God-seeing Moses heard, the voice of God calling him: "Go up into this mountain ... and die on the mountain which thou goest up" (Deut. 32:48–50).

And the blessed Paul, by the command of God, went up one of the mountains called Parigoria, and after some time he fell asleep in the Lord.

* * *

NOTES

8197. This took place on December 7, 374. Saint Ambrose at this time was only 34 years old. The bishops of both the Eastern and the Western Church equally approved the ordination of Ambrose, regarding his case as exceptional. It is true that this ordination was not strictly canonical, but the canon of the Council of Nicaea made an exception when the election was conditioned by a higher divine indication, as was the case in the present instance. Saint Basil the Great, in reply to the notice sent to him of Ambrose's ordination, wrote a letter in which he gave thanks to God for the election. "God, who made a prophet out of the shepherd Amos," writes the universal teacher in this letter, "has now made a bishop out of Ambrose, a man of noble birth, high rank, lofty character and wonderful eloquence, who nevertheless despised all these earthly distinctions in order to gain Christ ... Be strong, O man of God."

8200. Saint Ambrose listened to the oral instructions of this Simplicianus, whom he loved as his father, who had an enormous influence on Ambrose's formation in the matter of faith, and who afterward became his successor in the episcopal see at Mediolanum (Milan). Besides this, Ambrose zealously read and studied the works of the famous Origen, Didymus, Saint Basil the Great, with whom he was in close friendly communion, Saint Gregory the Theologian, and other outstanding fathers and teachers of the Church. According to the words of Blessed Augustine, afterward Bishop of Hippo and a famous teacher of the Church, who was converted from paganism to Christianity by Saint Ambrose, the latter would sit in his house during brief intervals of continuous study, his eyes fixed on a book and forgetting everything that went on around him. In such zealous pursuits, possessing high abilities and knowledge of secular sciences, especially Greek literature, Ambrose in a short time achieved remarkable progress also in Christian learning.

8214. This was in the year 385, before the feast of Pascha. Another similar event recurred in the following year, 386, when Justina persuaded Valentinian to issue a law in favor of the Arians, and then, around Pascha, raised so cruel a persecution against St. Ambrose that he, shut up in the church and prostrate before the sanctuary, prayed for help from on high. The people, fearing that he would be taken away by force, surrounded him and prayed with him in the church both day and night. The holy hierarch of God occupied the people at this time with readings from Holy Scripture, its interpretation, and the singing of psalms and hymns. From this time there entered into use in the Church of Milan, introduced by St. Ambrose in the Western Church on the model of the Eastern, the so-called antiphonal singing, that is, singing by two choirs. Meanwhile the soldiers sent by Justina began to let the people into the church, but did not permit them to leave. They were so struck by the singing of the Orthodox that they themselves responded to it from outside. At this time the sublime hymns of Ambrose himself in praise of the Holy Trinity were also sung. The prayers of the faithful were heard, and the hierarch was left with his flock.

8235. It was on April 4, 397. St. Ambrose reposed at the age of 67. His biographer, the presbyter Paulinus, adds that many children baptized at that time (on Pascha night), after they came up out of the water, saw Ambrose: some saw him sitting on the bishop's cathedra, while others pointed him out with their fingers to their parents as one walking about; but the parents, though they looked, did not see him, for their eyes were not purified. Many said that they saw a star above his body. The Church commemorates him on December 7, the day of his consecration as bishop, probably because the day of his death coincided with days of fasting or with Pascha. – St. Ambrose of Milan left behind a multitude of writings; some concern the interpretation of Holy Scripture, others expound the dogmas of the holy faith, and some impart lofty moral instruction, and so on. Such are his commentary on the Gospel of Luke, six books on the Hexaemeron, five books on the faith, an exposition of the Symbol of Faith, a book on the Incarnation, three books on the Holy Spirit, a book on the Mysteries, two books on penance, a teaching on the resurrection set forth in two books on the death of his brother and in two discourses on the deaths of the emperors Valentinian and Theodosius the Great, works on withdrawal from the world, virginity, widowers, the Patriarch Jacob and the blessed

life, on Elijah and fasting with praises of abstinence, and on the Patriarch Joseph as a model of chastity and other virtues, and so on. Among all the writings of Ambrose, his three books *On the Duties* (of church presbyters) hold the first place. The labors of St. Ambrose in ordering the Divine Service are also of great importance; he arranged the rite both of the Liturgy and of the other services for his church, and it spread throughout all Northern Italy. This rite is observed in Milan to this day, and the Milanese Liturgy still differs from the Roman in many peculiarities, which reveal in Ambrose a clear desire to draw near to the rites of the Eastern Church. In the order of service St. Ambrose introduced the following: 1) a lectionary, in which he designated the beginnings and endings of readings from the Gospel, the Apostle, and the Prophets; 2) the rite for celebrating the Eucharist, with prayers and prefaces; 3) an antiphonary, which was an entirely new introduction, adopted from the East. St. Ambrose wrote both the musical notation and the hymns for the antiphonary. Among the genuine hymns of St. Ambrose, one should note especially the hymn: *Thee, O God, we praise.* This song of thanksgiving, solemn in character, still repeated at every solemn thanksgiving to the Lord, was composed by St. Ambrose after he had won a complete victory over the Arians.



THE EIGHTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 8

8 декабря

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

Life of Our Venerable Father Patapius

Житие преподобного отца нашего Патапия

In Egypt, on the river Nile, there was a city called Thebes.[1] In this city the blessed Patapius was born. His parents were Christians, and they reared their son in piety and the fear of God. Having attained maturity, he despised the vanity of this world, and, leaving his home, his parents, and his friends, he took up the monastic life. Withdrawing into the Egyptian desert, he lived for God, toiling in fasting, prayer, and manifold hermit labors. When it became known about him, and many began to come to him and to glorify him for his virtuous life, he grieved that his stillness was being disturbed and that human lips were praising him. Leaving Egypt, he came to Constantinople. Here he shut himself in a cell which he built near the Blachernae,[2] by the city wall, and he remained in stillness, as if in the desert, unknown to anyone except the One God, speaking only with God in unceasing prayer. But just as a city set on a hill cannot be hidden,[3] so a virtuous man who has attained perfect holiness cannot remain unknown. God Himself glorifies those who glorify Him and who are filled with His grace, and He reveals them to others for their benefit. So this man, perfected in holiness and richly endowed with the grace of working miracles, revealed and glorified by God, was soon found, like a treasure hidden in a field.[4] For a certain Christian youth, blind from birth, guided by God

1. Thebes – the ancient capital of Upper (Southern) Egypt.
2. Blachernae – a district of Constantinople at the western corner of the city; in the days of the flourishing of the Byzantine Empire it was renowned throughout the East for its sanctuaries.
3. An expression from the Gospel. Mt. 5:14.
4. An expression from the Gospel parable. Mt. 14:44.

Himself, came to the cell of the Venerable Father Patapius and asked the blessed one to pray to God for the gift of sight, so that he might behold all the creation of God and from it come to the most perfect knowledge of the Creator Himself and glorify Him. The Venerable Father, seeing his faith, took pity on him and said:

"In the name of Jesus Christ, who gives light to the blind and life to the dead, receive your sight."

And at once the eyes of the one born blind were opened, and he began to see, and he glorified and gave thanks to God. The youth was known to many; therefore, seeing that he had received his sight, everyone marveled and began to ask how this had come about. He did not conceal the name of the wonderworker and benefactor through whom he had received healing from God. The fame of this miracle and of the Venerable Father spread among the people, and from then on many began to come to Patapius, asking for his prayers.

A certain distinguished Byzantine was suffering from dropsy, and his whole body had swollen. He spent much money on physicians, seeking healing from them and receiving none. Having heard of the holy Patapius, he ordered that he be carried to him, and with tears he begged the saint to heal his bodily infirmity by the healing grace of God. The physician who asked no payment first prayed fervently to God for him, then signed him with the sign of the Cross and anointed him with holy oil; and then all the water that weighed down his body flowed out by natural passages, his whole inner being was cleansed, and he became completely well.

Another youth was suffering from an evil demon, which drove him through mountains and deserts, now casting him into fire and water to destroy him, now hurling him from high and steep mountains to break and crush his whole body. It would have destroyed the youth had not the strengthening power of God preserved him from the enemy's constant malice and complete ruin. Once the demon, pursuing this youth with frightful speed to the seashore, intending to drown him in the depths, met on the way the Venerable Patapius, who had come out of his cell for this purpose by God's command, to free a creature made in the image of God from diabolical bondage. Seeing the blessed one from

afar, the demon rushed at him, rolling its eyes, foaming at the mouth, gnashing its teeth, and threatening to beat him. Drawing near to the saint, it cried out:

"Woe is me! Here again is Patapius! What am I to do, where am I to go, where am I to live after so many labors? I had barely found myself a dwelling, and now I am forcibly driven out of it. Truly, you are terrible, Nazarene,[5] and your power is everywhere and over all. Where shall I go? If I go into the desert, or into the city, or anywhere else, you are there before me and drive me out with a single sign of the Cross and your one name. I am defeated, crushed, and cast out!"

Saying this, the unclean spirit threw the youth into the air, and the wonderworker Patapius, tracing the sign of the Cross in the air with his finger, rebuked the spirit, saying:

"Depart, unclean spirit, and withdraw into the desert; thus Christ commands you through me, whose power you have unwillingly confessed."

No sooner had the saint spoken than the demon threw the youth to the ground and came out of him through his mouth like smoke. Coming to himself, the youth wept for joy and ascribed his deliverance from the unclean spirit first of all to God, and also to the Venerable Patapius.

A certain woman had a painful breast. Declared incurable by the physicians, she came to the Venerable when her illness had grown worse and worms had appeared in the wound in great numbers. Falling at his feet, she begged him with sobs and fervent entreaty for healing. The saint, signing the sore with the sign of the Cross, at once healed her. Having performed many other miracles, our Venerable Father Patapius drew near to his blessed repose, and in deep old age he departed to God, whom he had pleased all his life.[6] He was buried with honor in the church of St. John the Forerunner, to the glory of Christ our God,

5. The reference is to our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom the Jews, and after them the pagans, applied this name.

6. Venerable Patapius died at the beginning of the 7th century. On his miracles and his Dormition, see St. Andrew of Crete. His Life was written by St. Andrew after Patapius appeared to him in a dream, since St. Andrew, having at first heard much of the marvelous about Patapius, had regarded it with contempt and disbelief.

who is glorified in His saints, to Whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit belong honor and worship forever. Amen.

Kontakion, Tone 3:

Thy church, O holy one, the people, having found a spiritual remedy, come to it with diligence, asking to receive the cure of their infirmities and the remission of sins committed in life; for thou hast appeared as the intercessor for all who are in need, O Venerable Patapius.

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Commemoration of the Holy Apostles Sosthenes, Apollos, Cephas, Tychicus, Epaphroditus, and Caesar

Память святых Апостолов Сосфена, Аполлоса, Кифы, Тихика, Епафродита и Кесаря

The Holy Apostles Sosthenes, Apollos, Cephas, Tychicus, Epaphroditus, and Caesar belonged to the company of the Seventy Apostles, chosen by the Lord Jesus Christ for the preaching of the Gospel some time after the choosing and sending out to preach of the twelve Apostles (Lk. 10:1–24).

The Apostle Sosthenes, during the stay of the Apostle Paul in Corinth,[7] was the ruler of the Jewish synagogue.[8] During the uproar raised here against the Apostle by those demanding his condemnation, when the proconsul Gallio,[9] finding the matter outside his jurisdiction, drove the accusers from the tribunal, those who drove them off, together with all the Greeks who were there, seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the syn-

7. Corinth – the most ancient, famous and wealthy city of ancient Greece, in Achaia, on the Isthmus of Corinth, which joins the Peloponnese (Southern Greece) with Central Greece, in a beautiful and fertile plain at the southeastern corner of the Gulf of Corinth between the Ionian and Aegean Seas. Christianity was founded in Corinth by the Apostle Paul near the present Corinth, called Kuronto, which has only about 5,000 inhabitants.

8. Synagogues (from the Greek – assembly) – places of religious assembly of the Jews, which were public buildings for the conduct of public worship and instruction, for the resolution of disputed church questions, and for the conduct of judicial matters; these buildings also served as places of assembly for debates, as schools for children, and as libraries.

9. Gallio – the Roman proconsul (governor) of Achaia under the emperor Claudius, brother of the Roman philosopher Seneca.

agogue, and beat him before the tribunal (Acts 18:12–17). But afterwards he was converted to faith in Christ by the Apostle and became his fellow-worker in the work of preaching the Gospel of Christ. Later Sosthenes was bishop in Colophon.[10]

The Apostle Apollos came from Alexandria and was an eloquent man, learned and versed in the Scriptures. At first instructed only in the rudiments of the teaching of Christ, he, burning in spirit, spoke and taught accurately about the Lord, but knew only the baptism of John, having no knowledge of the regenerating power of Christian baptism. Shortly afterwards, when Apollos, with his preaching about Christ, reached Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla[11] learned of him, received him with love, and gave him a detailed instruction in the teaching of the Lord. Later, when he intended to go to Achaia, the brethren sent to the disciples there, urging them to receive him, and he, on arriving, greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he powerfully refuted the Jews, publicly proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 18:24–28). After that Apollos labored much in Corinth over the conversion of the pagans (Acts 19:1; 1 Cor. 3:6). In Corinth the love of the disciples for him even produced a certain division in the Church, which was later rebuked by the Apostle Paul: "For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not merely human? Who is Paul? Who is Apollos? They are only servants through whom you believed, and each as the Lord gave to him. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth; so neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who gives the growth" (1 Cor. 3:4–7).

At the time of the writing of the first Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, Apollos was with him in Ephesus and wished to come to them when it would be convenient (1 Cor. 16:14).

10. Colophon – an ancient city of Lydia, in the northwestern part of Asia Minor. The ruins of this city have been discovered in recent times.

11. Aquila – a Jew, native of Pontus; Priscilla – his wife; they lived by the work of making tents; they were converted to Christianity by the Apostle Paul and were his faithful disciples, contributing much to the progress of the Gospel. Afterwards they moved to Corinth, and from there to Ephesus. Aquila is numbered among the Seventy Apostles.

Later Apollos was in Crete,[12] and still later he was bishop of Caesarea.[13]

The Apostle Cephas, who together with the other Apostles labored much in the work of preaching the Gospel of Christ, was bishop in Colophon.

The Apostle Tychicus came from Asia Minor and was a disciple of the Holy Apostle Paul, who in his epistles calls him beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow-worker in the Lord (Col. 4:7; 6:21). During the third apostolic journey of the Holy Apostle Paul, when he was returning from Macedonia and Greece to Jerusalem, Tychicus accompanied him, sharing his labors (Acts 20:1–5). Afterwards he was with the Apostle Paul in Rome during his first imprisonment, whence Paul sent him with his own letters to the Ephesians (Eph. 6:21) and to the Colossians with other churches (Col. 4:7–9, 16), to inform them about himself and to comfort their hearts; he also sent him on his errands to Crete (Titus 3:12). Tychicus was with the Apostle during his second imprisonment in Rome as well, and on another occasion the Apostle sent him from there to Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:12). Later the Holy Apostle Tychicus was bishop in Colophon after the Apostle Sosthenes.

The Apostle Epaphroditus was one of the closest co-workers and fellow-laborers of the holy Apostle Paul. During the Apostle's imprisonment in Rome, St. Epaphroditus was sent by the Church of the Philippians with an offering for St. Paul. This zeal was very pleasing to the Apostle, chiefly because, bearing witness to the love of the Philippians for him and their sincere sharing in his sorrow, it vouched for their zeal for the faith itself (Phil. 4:10–17). To the Apostle's grief, Epaphrodit-

12. Crete – a large island in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea, south of the Aegean Sea. By its vastness and fertility it was formerly called the "queen of the islands" of the Mediterranean. The first beginnings of Christianity were laid by eyewitnesses of the event of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, for Cretans were present at it (Acts 2:11); afterwards Christianity was established and spread here by the Apostle Paul. In the 15th century Crete passed into the possession of the Turks.

13. Caesarea – a city of Palestine, on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. The beginning of Christianity here was laid by the holy Apostle Peter, beginning with the centurion Cornelius and all his household (Acts 10:1–48). After the destruction of Jerusalem, Caesarea was the chief city of Palestine and the seat of a bishop, to whom Jerusalem was subject, until at last, at the IV Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451), Jerusalem became an independent patriarchate. – At the present time not even ruins of ancient Caesarea remain.

us fell into a dangerous sickness while he was with him; but the Lord did not will to add new sorrow to the Apostle's sorrow: the sick man recovered and was sent back to the Philippians with a touching epistle from the Apostle. Afterwards St. Epaphroditus was bishop of Adriaca[14].

The Apostle Caesar, who also labored much in the work of preaching the Gospel, was bishop of Dyrrhachium[15].

Having faithfully shepherded the flock of Christ, all these holy Apostles gave up their souls to the Lord in peace, and now, standing before the throne of God in eternal joy, they receive from God the recompense for their many labors and toils[16].

* * *

Memory of the Holy Martyrs who suffered in Africa at the hands of the Arians

Память святых мучеников, в Африке от ариан пострадавших

These holy martyrs lived in the time of Zeno, emperor of the Greeks[17], when Africa was ruled, after the death of his father Genseric, by Hunneric[18], an Arian in faith. Taking counsel together with the bishops of like mind with him, the Arians Cyril and Vidimandis, he raised against the Orthodox a persecution so cruel that it surpassed the times of Diocletian and Maximian. Throughout all the cities and lands subject to him he dispatched fifteen thousand soldiers, commanding them to drive out from everywhere all the Orthodox priests. At this time the Orthodox once gathered together in one church and secretly celebrated the Divine Service there. Learning of this, the

14. Adria or Adriaca – a city in Thrace on the Red Sea, not far from Philippi, the city of Macedonia, which lay on the border with Thrace.

15. Dyrrhachium – a city in Boeotia, an ancient region of Central Greece.

16. Together with these holy Apostles, the Church on this day also commemorates the Apostle Onesiphorus, whose feast see 7 September. In the church service all seven holy Apostles are now sung.

17. Zeno – Byzantine emperor from 474 to 491.

18. Genseric – king and founder of the Vandal kingdom in North Africa. Hunneric, his son, reigned from 477 to 485. – The Vandals – a people of Germanic tribe, who came from the shores of the Baltic Sea, afterwards moved into Pannonia, on the right bank of the Danube, then seized the Iberian Peninsula, and finally settled in North Africa.

barbarians secretly, with drawn swords, cut down all the believers who were singing and glorifying God. They acted thus in fulfillment of Hunneric's command to kill suddenly all who were not baptized in the Arian baptism. Those who could not endure the torments sought salvation in flight, leaving their houses and villages; those who were steadfast in the Orthodox faith gave themselves willingly to torment. Thus 300 persons, who were established in the true faith and refused to think in the Arian manner, were cut down by the sword. The priests, however, were inflamed with even greater zeal for Orthodoxy and therefore suffered even more: two of them were burned, and sixty of the most eloquent among them had their tongues cut out from the very root. After that they were scattered over all the Greek lands. And upon them there appeared a great and miraculous power of God: deprived of their tongues, they preached boldly, speaking clearly and scattering the Arian false teachings, so that all who saw and heard them were astonished. And they confessed before the Vandals the Son of God as consubstantial with the Father.

At the same time in Rome, the wife of the city prefect, Sunilda, who was sick with the Arian heresy, compelled the wife of a certain Roman nobleman, named Anthusa, to accept the Arian baptism; but she could not persuade her, and in reply heard only that she had been baptized "with water and the Spirit" by Ambrose, bishop of Milan. Then Sunilda, in her rage, burned the holy Anthusa. The husband of the holy martyr was seized with fear, went of his own accord, and was baptized with the Arian baptism. Soon after this he, wishing to take a ride, mounted his horse; but during the journey, when he was opposite the city church, suddenly a bolt of lightning fell upon him and set him on fire; he was thrown from his horse and burned. Thus the judgment of God was executed upon him before the future, eternal fire of Gehenna.

* * *

THE NINTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 9

9 декабря

New Calendar December 9 · Old Calendar December 22 (civil dates)

Conception of St. Anne, the Foremother of God, when she conceived the Holy Theotokos

Зачатие святой богопраматери Анны, когда зачала святую Богородицу

Our Lord and God, desiring to create for Himself a living Church and a holy House for His dwelling, sent His Angel to the righteous Joachim and Anne. From them He willed to prepare for Himself a Mother according to the flesh, and He foretold the conception of barren and childless Anne and the birth of a Virgin from her. Thus was the Holy Virgin Mary conceived and born, according to God's promise, though through bodily union. For only the one Lord and God, Jesus Christ, was born of the Most Holy Virgin Mary without a husband and without marriage, ineffably and unspeakably, of the Holy Spirit, being born perfect God and perfect Man. For His Incarnation, the Lord received in perfection everything necessary to human nature, just as from the beginning He created and fashioned human nature itself. Some have said that the Most Holy Virgin was born after 7 months—and was born without a husband—but this is untrue. She was indeed born after nine months and through human union. The feast in honor of the Conception is celebrated in the most honorable church of the Most Holy Lady our Theotokos, which is in *Evoraniah*, near the holy Great Church.[8263]

Troparion, Tone 4:

Today the bonds of childlessness are loosed, for God hath heard Joachim and Anne, and, beyond all hope, clearly promised them that they should bear the Maiden of God, from whom He Himself,

the Uncontainable, was born, becoming man; and He commanded the Angel to cry unto her: Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Kontakion, Tone 4:

Today the whole world keepeth festival for Anne's conception, which came to pass by God; for she brought forth her who, beyond all words, gave birth to the Word.

* * *

Commemoration of St. Anna the Prophetess, mother of the Prophet Samuel

Память святой пророчицы Анны, матери пророка Самуила

The holy and blessed Anna the Prophetess was from the city of Armathaim, situated in the hill country of the portion of the sons of Ephraim,[1] and was married to Elkanah, a man of the tribe of Levi.[2] Because she was barren and bore no children, Elkanah, her husband, took another wife, Peninnah, who bore him children, and he rejoiced with her. Grieved by the reproach of childlessness,[3] not only from her rival Peninnah, but also from her husband, who nevertheless loved her, and from neighbors and relatives, Anna suffered greatly and prayed much to God, diligently keeping the commandments of God's law. Every morning and every evening she offered her holy offerings, that the Lord might deliver her from this reproach and grant her the blessing of children. Every year, at the appointed time prescribed by the law, Elkanah went with all his household from his city to Shiloh,[4]

1. Armathem, otherwise *Rama*, a city in the district of Zuph, bordering on the portion of the tribe of Benjamin. In this city Samuel had his house when he was judge of the people of Israel; here he resided at that time and anointed Saul to the kingdom (1 Kgdms. 7:17, 9:5–27, 10:1–2).
2. The tribe of Levi had no portion of its own; the Levites lived among the other tribes (Deut. 18:1–2).
3. Among the Jews, fruitfulness in children signified the blessing of God, while barrenness, on the contrary, was regarded as a sign of God's disfavor and of reproach among men.
4. Shiloh was a city in the tribe of Ephraim, almost in the middle of the promised land, on this side of the Jordan. Here, after the crossing of the Jordan and the conquest of the Promised Land, the tabernacle of Moses (the portable Jewish temple) was set up; here the Jews prayed, kept their feasts, and held their councils. Now only the ruins of the ancient city remain.

to offer sacrifice to the Lord God Almighty[5] by the hand of Eli the high priest.[6]

And once, after sacrificing to God, Elkanah divided the remains of the sacrifice among the members of his family: one portion he gave to Peninnah and her sons and daughters, and another he gave to Anna, for he loved her more than Peninnah, although she had no children. At this, Peninnah's heart was filled with envy and resentment, while for Anna it became the source of fresh, still greater grief and insult. Troubled by her rival's envious reproaches, she wept and did not eat, and found no comfort in the consolations of her loving husband (1 Kgdms. 1:5, 8); her countenance was sorrowful, and she knew not what to do. When the sacrificial meal was over, Anna sent her husband and household away and hastened alone to the tabernacle. Falling to the ground, she poured out before God the grief of her heart and made this vow:

"O Lord of hosts, if Thou wilt indeed look upon the affliction of Thy handmaid, remember me, and not forget Thy handmaid, but give Thy handmaid a male child, then will I give him unto the Lord as a gift all the days of his life."

While Anna prayed thus for a long time, Eli the high priest, who sat by the door of the tabernacle, noticed her and observed that her lips moved, but no voice was heard; and he said to her:

"How long wilt thou be drunken? Sober thyself from thy wine, and go from the presence of the Lord!"

"No, my lord," Anna answered, "I am a woman sorrowful in spirit; I have drunk no wine, but have poured out my soul before God. Do not count thy handmaid a worthless woman, for out of my great grief and sorrow have I spoken until now."

5. In accordance with the law of Moses, see Ex. 23:17.

6. Eli was high priest and at the same time judge of Israel, of the line of Ithamar, the younger son of Aaron, the first to unite in his person both spiritual and secular authority. He had a gentle character, which inspired love and trust, and an unfeigned justice for which the people blessed him; but his goodness passed into weakness, which was especially revealed in his relations with his sons Hophni and Phinehas, who, though priests, allowed themselves various abuses in the tabernacle, for which the Lord, after repeated admonitions, punished them with a shameful death in captivity.

Then Eli said:

"Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant thy petition."

And God indeed did not reject Anna's prayer; He not only granted her the fruit of her womb through Eli's words, but also bestowed the gift of prophecy upon the son born to her thereafter.

Having received God's promise with unwavering faith, Anna joyfully returned to her husband, and after some time conceived and gave birth to Samuel,[7] who later became a prophet and guide of the people of Israel. When the child had been weaned, Anna took him with her at the proper time and went to Shiloh, accompanied by her husband. There she again prostrated herself before the Lord God, giving thanks to Him. After the sacrifice had been offered, the father and mother brought Samuel to Eli the high priest, and Anna said to him:

"My lord! I am the woman who stood here beside thee, praying to the Lord for this child; and the Lord hath granted me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore I give him to the Lord all the days of his life, to serve the Lord."

Eli blessed Anna and said:

"May the Lord grant thee children in place of Samuel."

Anna rejoiced and, bowing before the sanctuary, sang from the abundance of her heart this prayerful song: "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord; mine horn is exalted in my God; my mouth is enlarged against mine enemies, because I rejoice in Thy salvation"[8271] (1 Kgdms. 2:1).

After this, Elkanah and his pious wife returned to Armathaim, while Samuel remained at the tabernacle to serve the Lord. Thereafter Anna had three more sons and three daughters, and in deep old age departed to the eternal dwellings.[8]

* * *

7. From the Hebrew: "heard by God," "asked of God."
8. 1100 years before the Nativity of Christ.

Commemoration of Venerable Stephen the New-shining One[9]

Память преподобного Стефана Новосиятеля

Venerable Stephen was born and brought up in Constantinople. His parents, Zacharias and Theophania, were distinguished for piety and Christian virtues; they lived not far from the holy church of the Protomartyr, the Archdeacon Stephen. Theophania, the mother of the Venerable one, observed strict restraint in food even while she was pregnant with him: until his birth she partook only of bread with vegetables and water, already preparing the ascetic in her womb. As soon as the child was born, a beautiful image of a cross appeared upon his breast, a visible sign of that "crucifixion of the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24) which he manifested in his later life. He began to practise restraint while still in swaddling clothes and nursing at his mother's breast: he would not take his mother's milk if she offered to nurse him after eating a plentiful meal. This happened many times and would continue for two or three days, so that the relatives of the holy infant, observing it, were perplexed and grieved. Yet this did not harm the child's health in the least. The infant was baptized, grew, and was weaned from his mother's breast. When he reached boyhood, he willingly and diligently applied himself to his studies, while remaining obedient to his parents. When St. Methodius took the episcopal see, by God's ordering the pious Zacharias, Stephen's father, was deemed worthy of the rank of presbyter and enrolled among the clergy of the great Church of Constantinople; at the same time the wise-in-God Stephen received the tonsure and joined the clergy of that same church, and, among other things, foretold his father's approaching death. In his eighteenth year, after his father's death, Venerable Stephen undertook the ascetic labor of seclusion. Withdrawing to the church of the holy and chief Apostle Peter, he remained there in unceasing prayer and ate only vegetables.

9. Venerable Stephen is called the New-shining One because he shone, like the ancient ascetics, with a holy life.

Here he soon received encouragement from on high in his ascetic struggle: one night the Apostle of Christ appeared to him and said:

"Peace be unto thee, child. May this beginning of thy virtuous life be for thy good, and may the Lord strengthen thee therein."

After living thus for three years, Stephen was also deemed worthy of a vision of the Hieromartyr Antipas,[10] who appeared to him and said:

"Peace be unto thee, child; be watchful over thyself; I will not forsake thee."

This exhortation moved the Venerable one to redouble his ascetic labor in prayer and fasting; from that time he ate vegetables only once or twice a week, and then without salt. Living thus, Stephen attained a high degree of moral purity, was deemed worthy of the rank of hierarch, and performed many miracles.

In the twelfth year of the reign of the pious Emperor Basil[11] and the fortieth of the life of Stephen, a great earthquake occurred, by which the church of St. Antipas, at which the Venerable one was then dwelling, was utterly destroyed. The Venerable one departed from that place and settled in a certain tomb-cave, and spent twelve years in it. During this time all the hair of his head and beard, as well as his teeth, fell out, and his whole body fell into infirmity, since there was great dampness in that cave; and the Venerable one reached the extreme degree of mortification of his flesh. Having thus wearied his flesh, he afterwards came out of the cave, but even after that his bed was a plain board covered with a coarse sackcloth. Then he took the Angelic schema-monastic habit, and only on the Lord's feasts, after the performance of the Divine service, did he partake of one vegetable and a little water. Nourished in this way, this blessed citizen of the heavenly fatherland traversed for fifty years his narrow, strictly ascetic path of life, and in the seventy-third year of his whole life[12], or rather of the mortification of his flesh, he yielded up his spirit to God.

10. St. Antipas, Hieromartyr, Bishop of Pergamum in Asia, died in the year 95; his memory (11 April) was especially honored in Constantinople, whither, under Theodosius the Great (379–395), a bull in which St. Antipas had been burned was transferred from Pergamum.
11. Basil the Macedonian, i.e., in the year 879.
12. In the year 912.

* * *

Memory of the Venerable Sophronius, Archbishop of Cyprus

Память преподобного Софрония, архиепископа Кипрского

The Venerable Sophronius was the son of Christian, God-wise parents who lived on the island of Cyprus. He received a good education, but he preferred to occupy himself with the writings of the holy Fathers, studying the Law of God day and night; at the same time he also ordered his life according to the commandments of the Lord. And he advanced so much in piety and good works that he was granted by the Lord the gift of working miracles, and he performed many wonders. After the death of St. Damian, Bishop of the Church of Cyprus, Sophronius was chosen by the holy council and all the people and was ordained in his place. Having occupied the episcopal see and taken charge of his native church, the Venerable one showed himself a true father to his flock: he interceded for widows and the poor, helped orphans and the helpless, and defended the oppressed and wronged. And having lived thus and pleased God, he died in peace[13].

* * *

NOTES

8263. A detailed account of the conception and birth of the Most Holy Theotokos is found in the Life of the holy God-parents Joachim and Anna, on 9 September. The joy of the righteous God-parents Joachim and Anna in the Temple of Jerusalem, and their living gratitude to God, who resolved their barrenness and took away from them the reproach among their neighbors, was in fact the beginning of the celebration of the Conception. In her who was conceived, not only her righteous parents but the whole world had a sure pledge of redemption, because her conception was by the special gracious providence of God. But the beginning of the actual church celebration of the Conception of the Theotokos is difficult to determine precisely, for lack of written monuments; yet it may be confidently supposed that this celebration began in ancient times, for all the circumstances of the life of the Mother of God were important and sacred for the ancient Orthodox Christians. Venerable Andrew of Crete, in the seventh century, wrote a canon and a homily for the day of the Conception of the Theotokos. The day of the Conception

13. In the sixth century.

is assigned to 9 December, because this day falls nine months before the day of the Nativity of the Theotokos. In Constantinople the feast in honor of the Conception of the Theotokos was celebrated on this day at the Euranias, according to another reading Uranes, near the church of St. Sophia. Here a church of the Theotokos was built by a senator already in the time of Constantine the Great.

8271. This wondrously exalted song, full of prophetic contemplation of the mysteries of the providential economy and imbued with deep humility, is set forth in the second chapter of the first book of Kingdoms, and reads thus: "My heart rejoices in the Lord; my horn is exalted in my God; my mouth is wide open against my enemies, because I rejoice in Thy salvation. There is none so holy as the Lord, for there is none besides Thee; and there is no rock like our God. Do not multiply proud speeches; let no bold words come out of your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. The bow of the mighty is broken, and the feeble are girded with strength; the sated labor for bread, and the hungry rest; even the barren bears seven times, and she who has many children languishes. The Lord kills and makes alive, brings down to the grave and raises up; the Lord makes poor and makes rich, humbles and exalts. He raises the poor from the dust, lifts the needy from the dunghill, to seat them with princes, and gives them the throne of glory as an inheritance; for the foundations of the earth are the Lord's, and He has set the world upon them. He keeps the feet of His saints, but the lawless perish in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The Lord will break in pieces those who strive with Him; from heaven He will thunder upon them. The Lord is holy. Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, and let not the strong man glory in his strength, and let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows the Lord. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth, and will give strength to His King, and will exalt the horn of His Anointed." The name *Messiah* is pronounced for the first time; it corresponds to the title of King, and means *Anointed*, one who received from above the special gifts of the Holy Spirit. The King-*Messiah*, or *Christ*, here is named that promised Deliverer whom Jacob, in his blessing of Judah, foretold under the name of Reconciler, to whom the peoples must submit (Gen. 4:10), and whom God Himself, in His conversation with Moses, named a *Prophet* from among his brethren (Deut. 18:18–19).[1*]

THE TENTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 10

10 декабря

New Calendar December 10 · Old Calendar December 23 (civil dates)

Passion of the Holy Martyrs Mina, Hermogenes and Eugraphus

Страдание святых мучеников Мины, Ермогена и Евграфа

After the Roman emperors Diocletian and Maximian voluntarily abdicated the throne, being unable to exterminate the holy faith of Christ on earth, there succeeded to the throne: in Rome, Maxentius[1]; in the East, Maximin[2]; and in Gaul, Constantine, who afterwards believed in Christ and enlightened the universe with the light of the Christian faith. The persecution of Christians did not cease under them, especially in the East, where it seemed that the earth and sea were trembling and rising in tumult against the ever-growing Church of Christ. But the more the Church of Christ was persecuted, the more it grew and flourished, being stained with martyrs' blood, like a lily growing among thorns. The impious Emperor Maximin was a zealous adherent of his polytheistic impiety and a great hater and persecutor of Christian piety. It was reported to him that all Alexandria, the most famous city in Egypt, had been thrown into agitation because of the increase of Christians and the disturbance that had arisen between them and the pagans. Unable to go there himself, and needing to remain in Byzantium, Maximin sent in his place one of his nobles, a prudent man, learned in Greek letters and a skilled orator, named Mina, a native of Athens. He charged him with quelling the disturbance that had arisen in Alexandria and restoring the disrupted order: to exterminate Christianity in the city, to establish their impious ancestral faith, and to

1. From 305–312 A.D.
2. Maximin Daza – emperor of the eastern half of the empire from 305 to 313 A.D.

bring back to him those who had turned from paganism to Christ. Mina outwardly seemed ready to support the emperor's faith and to carry out his impious will; in his soul, however, he was a true Christian and a keeper of the commandments of God, but for the time he concealed his true faith, awaiting the divine call to ascetic struggle and the martyr's crown.

Having received the emperor's command, he quickly arrived in Alexandria and easily quelled the disturbance there: by wise persuasion he reconciled both opposing sides, Christians and pagans, and allowed each to profess his faith with impunity; then, having corrected the unjust provisions in the laws, Mina reported everything to the emperor in writing. He at once resolved to confess before all his own faith in Christ, which he had hitherto concealed, intending both to serve as an example of piety and a source of salvation for others, and himself to undertake the martyr's struggle. He spoke thus to himself:

"If I give myself up to torment at another time, I alone will be rewarded; but now I can also lead others to the martyr's crowns."

Therefore Mina began openly to glorify the name of Jesus Christ and to teach the holy faith, persuading the unbelievers not only by words but also by deeds, for he had been granted from on high the gift of healing diseases through invoking the name of Christ and by the sign of the holy Cross. Once, when Mina was walking through the middle of the city with the people following him, it happened that on the road he saw a multitude of cripples, lame, blind, poor, deaf and demon-possessed. Having prayed to God that He would manifest His power through his hands, for the conversion of the pagan people to the faith, he invoked the name of Christ; then laying his hands upon the sick, he made the sign of the holy Cross over each of them, and at once all received healing: the blind regained their sight, the mute spoke, the lame leapt up like harts, and the demoniacs were freed from the unclean spirits. At this sight the people were astonished, and many believed in Christ; and the holy Mina, having taught them the true faith, joined them to the Christian Church.

Some of the pagans, blinded by unbelief and malice, to whom the demonic festivals celebrated by them in gluttony, drunkenness and de-

bauchery were pleasing, did not love a pure and temperate life; being themselves sons of malice, hating the light and not wishing to endure the mockery of their gods and the dishonouring of the feasts in their honour, they secretly informed the emperor that Mina, as he himself believed in the crucified Galilean[3], had corrupted the whole Alexandrian people with this faith, and that the temples of the ancient gods were already emptying. Learning of this, the emperor was greatly angered, and, summoning his nobles and counsellors, began to complain to them of Mina, that he had done contrary to his command, and instead of destroying Christianity in Alexandria, had spread it, and had turned the Hellenes[4], who were devoted to the ancestral laws, to the new Galilean faith[5]. The nobles advised the emperor to send there someone who would be able to restore all that Mina had disrupted, and either persuade him or compel him to turn again to the pagan gods; and for all this they advised choosing someone especially devoted to the emperor and faithfully serving him, who would take care to preserve and exactly carry out all that was commanded him. When they began to consult among themselves and to search for such a man, the most suitable for this purpose seemed to all the governor of the city, named Hermogenes, a man of rank and esteem; all agreed to send him, as one able to accomplish all that the emperor should command. And at once Maximin sent Hermogenes to Alexandria, giving him from Byzantium a military detachment, so that he might bring Mina to trial and cleanse the city of what he supposed to be the Christian error. Hermogenes was likewise a native of Athens; he had been born and brought up in Hellenic impiety, but was of a good and gentle character; although he did not know Christ, the true God, yet he honoured Him by deeds fitting only to Christians, "for when the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature the things of the law, these, not having the law, are a law unto themselves" (Rom. 2:14).

3. That is, Jesus Christ, to whom the pagans gave this name, mistakenly supposing that He was born in Nazareth of Galilee, in which He spent all His childhood.
4. Before Christ, Greeks were called Hellenes, and in Holy Scripture this name designates pagans in general, both Greeks and other peoples, because many of them spoke Greek.
5. That is, into the Christian faith.

As Hermogenes was sailing with the army to Egypt, on the way there, one night in a dream, three radiant men appeared to him and said:

"Know, Hermogenes, that not even the least good deed is despised by God; therefore God accepts your good deeds too, and this journey of yours, undertaken with the intention of destroying many Christians, He will turn into a source of your glory and reward in heaven. So do not forget our words, for through this journey you shall come to know the True and Eternal King. And we shall send you such a man as will make you a friend of that Blessed King, and you shall receive from Him such honour as your present lord cannot bestow upon you."

Awaking from the dream, Hermogenes began to ponder with fear and amazement what he had seen, and he was at a loss as to what was to befall him; he hoped to receive some higher honour, but from the kings who reign temporarily on earth, and not from the Heavenly King, whom he did not yet know, since the eyes of his soul had not yet been enlightened.

After some days of a long voyage, Hermogenes put in to shore at the city of Alexandria and entered the city in glory, to the sound of timbrels and trumpets, while the whole people met him and escorted him with honour to the imperial palace. When evening came and the people dispersed, the blessed Mina came to Hermogenes, wishing to speak with him privately about the True God and the holy faith, knowing that counsel is more readily heard and more quickly accepted in such circumstances, and that if anything unpleasant is said, it is also more easily borne than in the presence of the people.

Entering to Hermogenes, Mina said:

"Glory to the one great God, by whose providence you have come here!"

Hermogenes, however, hearing of the One God and seeing several courtiers standing there, at once ordered Mina to be seized and placed under guard, fearing to be slandered before the emperor as one who received the emperor's enemy in private conversation. And, addressing those present, he said:

"Tomorrow this secret partisan of the Galileans shall learn what a friend I am to the emperor's enemies, and shall understand whether there is one god or many."

In the morning, when a place for judgment had been prepared in the square and a multitude of people had gathered, Hermogenes sat in the judge's seat, surrounded by armour-bearers, and ordered the holy Mina to be brought to him for trial.

The warrior of Christ stood before him with a bright countenance and a fearless soul, burning with zeal for God. And the judge said to him:

"Mina! It befits every man to honour the emperor and the gods of the emperor, and to be grateful for their benefactions; but you honour neither the gods nor the emperor, having forgotten their benefactions."

The saint answered:

Judge! It is fitting to express gratitude to one's benefactors only so long as it is beneficial, both to the benefactor and to the one who receives the benefit. When it harms both, then one must reject the benefit as harmful, and the benefactor as well. To honor kings is a holy thing, for the sake of their power and rule; but when kings honor God improperly and impiously, God Who is the beginning of all things, and do not render Him the honor due Him, then to honor such kings is unjust. Above all, one should not thoughtlessly honor their gods before first examining whether they are as mighty as the true God is mighty. Are they without beginning, are they infinite, are they immortal? And if they lack any one of these attributes, they must be despised; for how can they be gods if they are imperfect? Therefore, with a good intention and a pure heart, one must test who is truly God. When I was in Athens, as you yourself know, Judge, I kept the laws of my fathers. Leaving my parents in my youth, I devoted myself with great desire and zeal to books, and with no small labor I went through all the teaching of the Hellenes, which is founded on false fables. Learning, however, that the Christians also had certain books, I desired to read them too. And as I read them, I perceived such a hidden benefit to the soul in them that it is impossible to express it. Comparing the Christian writings with the Hellenic teaching, I found them to differ greatly from one

another, as if set against each other: in the former I saw power and truth, but in the latter error and deceit. For what is contained in the Christian writings reveals the power of Christ, which befits God; the Hellenic compositions, however, represent God as having human weaknesses, passions and lusts, full of lying, turmoil, intemperance and shamelessness. They describe the gods waging civil wars among themselves, defeated and wounded even by mortal men; these writings are full also of a multitude of every other kind of evil, lies and fables. In general, reading the Christian writings leads to salvation through the knowledge of the truth, while the Hellenic writings lead to certain perdition, a falling into impiety, into foul passions and error. But although the Christian writings are so salutary, I did not immediately resolve to follow their teaching, but decided to test the power of Christ in deed, so as to learn the truth from my own experience. And when I met a paralytic, I invoked over him the name of Christ, and the sick man at once recovered. I, having come to know the one all-powerful God, renounced the Hellenic error and, receiving holy baptism, gave myself over to Christ. From that time until now I quickly and easily heal grievous diseases and incurable sufferings, which only God can cure, healing them through the invocation of the name of Christ alone. The witness of all I have said is this whole people standing around this square, and no one can say that my words are false and deceitful, since all that I have said can be tested in deed by you yourselves.

While the saint was saying this and much else about Christ God, the people standing around listened to him attentively from the third hour until the seventh, and they wished to hear his words further, and all the more did they not wish to see his sufferings. At last the whole people, as if with one voice, cried out to Hermogenes:

"Do not trouble yourself any longer, good judge! For we are all witnesses of the miracles wrought by the power of Christ; he has not spoken a single false word, and there is no deceit on his lips. Had you yourself been here at that time, you too would have come to know the truth and been convinced that one should honor no other god than the One whom Mina preaches."

Hermogenes, seeing the boldness of the people and understanding that all who listened to Mina's teaching were turning toward Christ, feared to subject him to torments; and being unable to answer anything against the truth, he was put to shame and ordered him to be led away to prison. Rising, he went sorrowfully to his chambers, while the people dispersed to their homes, glorifying St. Mina.

Confined in the prison, the saint sang:

"Thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put to shame those who hate us. Thou hast opened my mouth in parables, and uttered dark sayings from of old" (cf. Ps. 43:8; 77:2).

Meanwhile Hermogenes, from grief and anxiety, neither ate nor slept at night, for he was afraid both of the emperor and of the people: of the people, lest they cause a disturbance and disorder on account of Mina, and still more of the emperor, lest he be angered against him should he not subject Mina to a painful death. And again in the morning, seating himself on the judgment seat and preparing instruments of torture, he ordered the saint to be brought in bound, and said to him:

"Tell me, impious one, on what hope did you dare to stir up the people not to obey the emperor, to revile the gods without shame, and why did you urge them to obey your lying words and to accept some strange faith of yours?"

To this the saint replied:

"It is not I who stir up the people not to obey the impious command of the emperor, but the zeal of God; for the people are zealous for their Lord, Whom they have come to know through signs and wonders. If I have spoken ill of your emperor's gods before the people, then surely it behooves every man who has a right view and sound judgment of a matter not to love, but to hate, that which he sees and recognizes as false; the truth, however, must be loved and honored. And the truth, about which there is no doubt for men, is Christ Himself!"

To this the judge answered:

"Madman, it only seems to you that the truth is Christ; but I will show you at once that one should not worship the Crucified One, and that everything you said yesterday is false. If I cut off or burn one of the members of your body, can you, who worship Christ, make that

severed or burned member whole again? And if you are not able to do this, what healing will you bring to others?"

Then the saint said again:

"I desire, O judge, that you subject me to every torment for Christ, and I hope that then you too, scorning this temporal glory which you now have, will be one of those over whom my Christ reigns."

Incensed at these words, the judge ordered Mina's feet to be cut off, the skin of his shins to be stripped away, and in this state he was set before him, so that, tormented by the pain of his wounds, he could no longer answer his questions about the gods. But the saint, when the flesh had been cut from his legs, standing upon the bare bones, began to sing: "My foot stands in the right way; in the congregations will I bless the Lord" (Ps. 25:12).

And although blood flowed abundantly from his feet, the martyr endured his suffering with a joyful countenance and with courage; his tongue spoke still more freely, glorifying the one true God and exposing godlessness. The judge, seeing this, ordered Mina's tongue to be cut out; and when the servants were about to carry out the order, the saint said to the tormentor:

"If you not only cut out my tongue but also gouge out my eyes, you will not defeat me even by this, for the law of Christ is a lamp to my feet (cf. Ps. 118:105). I hope indeed that, even after you have cut out my tongue, you yourself will proclaim the greatness of my Christ."

And indeed, when Mina's tongue had been cut out and blood flowed from his mouth, even then the saint did not abandon his courage, but by his gaze showed that he was ready to suffer for Christ with every member of his body.

Then the judge ordered his eyes to be gouged out, and when this had been done, the saint bowed his head, seeking by this at least to express gratitude to God for granting him to endure such torments for Him. And again he was thrown into prison, while the judge left the square, saying:

"Tomorrow I will give his body to be eaten by the birds."

The saint lay in the prison, exhausted from his wounds and barely alive from his sufferings. But at night, in the third hour, suddenly a

light like lightning filled the prison, and Christ the Lord Himself appeared. Approaching the place where the martyr lay, He first filled the saint's heart with joy and courage; then He healed his tongue, restored the sight of his eyes, made his feet whole again, and as it were raised and resurrected him from the dead, making his whole body healthy and unharmed. Then He said to the martyr:

"Hear me, Mina! I am Jesus Christ, for whom you suffer. I have come to visit you, though before this I was not far from you, looking upon your struggle and waiting for your love for Me to become known to the judges and authorities; but since they have now come to know it, from now on I will openly defend you. As for Hermogenes, who wars against Me and does not love My name, tomorrow you will see him humbled and entreating you, and soon he will be your friend in ascetic struggle as well, for together with you he will suffer, and together he will receive the crown, since it is not consistent with My goodness that his many good deeds should perish because of his ignorance."

Having said this, the Savior breathed upon Mina with His Holy Spirit and filled him with inexpressible joy.

Meanwhile Hermogenes, lying on his bed, reflected upon the origin and homeland of St. Mina, upon his wisdom and courage, and upon his former glory, when he had great power with the emperor and obtained the emperor's favors for many. Reflecting on all this, he called himself wretched for having subjected such a man to torments; supposing, however, that he had already died from his grievous sufferings, he wept over him and resolved to bury his body with honor.

When day came and the people had gathered from all over the city of Alexandria, Hermogenes again took his seat as judge and sent the soldiers standing before him to bring the martyr's body out of the prison into the square. The soldiers went and found the prison, which had previously been exceedingly dark, filled with heavenly light; and near the saint they saw two handsome and radiant men, like soldiers, ready to defend him and repel his enemies. They found St. Mina not only alive, but entirely well, seeing clearly, speaking freely, and singing: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me" (Ps. 22:4).

In astonishment they stood speechless, as though mute. When they had become fully convinced that what they saw was no apparition, but a reality wrought by the power of God, they cried aloud:

"Great is the God of the Christians!"

And at once they believed in Christ, and did not return to the one who had sent them. The judge, after waiting a long time with the people for those soldiers, grew troubled and sent even more soldiers, ordering them to bring the martyr's body, for he thought that Mina had already died. But these too, seeing the same as the first soldiers, believed in Christ and joined them. When the saint learned from the soldiers that the whole city had gathered in the square and that the judge was already seated on the judgment seat, he himself went to the judge and the people, accompanied by the soldiers who had believed in Christ. As he approached the square, he sang:

"Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear" (Ps. 26:3). At once all fixed their eyes upon him and marvelled to see him alive and well, walking, seeing, and speaking, though only yesterday he had been half-dead, blinded, and without a tongue. And all cried out with one voice:

"Great is the power of Christ, which conquers death itself! Blessed are you, city of Alexandria, for through this one man you have understood the deception of the demons and learned the truth of Christ: truly, this is the dominion and power of God! Rejoice, preacher and champion of the One True God and Savior! Rejoice!"

The judge was even more astonished at this new and wondrous happening, and, fearing that the people might rise up against him, wished to leave the square. But the people cried out to him:

"Do not leave, most worthy judge, and do not begrudge the city its great happiness, that today it learns of the One True God and will walk the path of righteousness toward the light of truth."

Then the judge, signaling to the people to be silent, ordered the saint to come near him and stand closer, for he still regarded what he saw as a deception, having no knowledge of Christ within himself. He gazed attentively at the saint and felt him with his hands, to determine whether this was truly Mina and whether he had indeed been healed of

his wounds. When he had satisfied himself that all this was truly so, Hermogenes marvelled and stood silent in astonishment. Then, scarcely having recovered himself, he said:

"Tell me, man, what are these astonishing and unexpected things that are taking place? Is it only your God who can do this, or can some other god do so as well?"

In reply, the saint first set forth in detail the teaching concerning the God without beginning, then concerning the creation of man and his fall into sin, then concerning the Incarnation of Christ, the redemption of the human race, and Christ's voluntary suffering on the Cross; and finally, in conclusion to his discourse, he added:

"God, being good and merciful, came down to earth for the salvation of men, and desires that no one should perish or be deprived of eternal blessings. As a mother cares for her son, enduring the sorrows and injuries he causes her, overcome by her natural love for him, and does not grow angry with him if he does anything unseemly, since he acts in ignorance and without any intent, but patiently waits for him to come of age and grow, wishing to see him a mature man, honoured and esteemed among men; even so our God, who created us, cares for us and, like a loving father, bears all the evil we do in ignorance, overcome by His goodness. He desires nothing so much as that we should inherit His glory and grow into a perfect man, attaining the measure of spiritual maturity. Seeing you being destroyed by the devil, failing to come to the knowledge of the truth, and provoking Him to anger by serving idols and worshipping false gods, He grieves over your destruction. Yet, caring for you as for His own children, God has now reproved you through me and overcome your error and foolish zeal, as all who look upon me acknowledge. So that each of you may recognize in me the power of Christ, behold: I, a man who has already reached old age, was mutilated yesterday, deprived of all bodily strength, and cast into prison almost dead; yet today I stand before you whole and unharmed, as though born anew this very day and appeared in this world in even better health. And if anyone wishes to know who the true God is, let him believe that He is the One who restored to me my tongue and eyes, my legs, and perfect health. Let him believe in the One who from the be-

ginning created this world and all that is in it, and gave life to creation. Understand this, you also, judge, and do not remain ignorant of Him who cares for you and awaits your conversion. You too must turn to Christ, as He Himself has revealed to me. Rejoice, then, that you will come to the All-good and Eternal King, and together with me will share in the martyr's struggle!"

The judge was a man whose soul was good and receptive to grace, and he began to know the true God, partly through the saint's words and partly through the miracle that had taken place, after the divine light touched the eyes of his heart. He now also remembered the vision he had seen while sailing on a ship, and felt that God desired to number him among His faithful servants and friends. Therefore, like one who had received some great gain, he rejoiced, and wondered only how he could be worthy of God's mercy, after having remained in ungodliness for so long.

As he pondered this, divine grace, which was calling him to the truth, granted him a wondrous vision: together with his friends, he saw two men standing near St. Mina, radiant as lightning, with wings, and holding a crown above the martyr's head. At the sight of them he was greatly afraid, and asked his friends who were with him whether they too saw what he saw. They said that they saw the same thing. Then Hermogenes rose from his seat and, pointing with his hand toward the saint, cried aloud to the people:

"Truly, this is a servant of the true God, and great is the God whose worship he teaches us; for He wondrously sends help from heaven to His servants, protects them, and enables them to overcome their adversaries. Until this day I was mad, giving myself over to the service of demons and seeking to lead you also to them, though you desire to believe rightly in Christ."

Having said this, he wished to fall at the martyr's feet, but, seeing the angelic forms, he feared to approach. When the Angels became invisible, Hermogenes went up to St. Mina, embraced his honoured feet, and kissed them, saying:

"Pray for me, true servant of God; pray, I beseech you in the name of that very truth which you preach. Pray that I, unworthy as I am,

may also be counted worthy to become a servant of your God; and if I am granted His grace, I shall begin to repent of my former error and madness."

The saint said to him:

"Be at peace, good judge, and do not doubt God's mercy. For I know that He is compassionate and merciful, and I hope that He will not cast you away as you come to Him, but will also write your name in the book of life. Accepting your earnest faith in Him, He has revealed to me concerning you that He desires you also to glorify His divine name through martyrdom."

Having said this, the saint remembered that the people had been without food all day, for they had all forgotten about eating as they watched what was happening and marvelled at it. No one wished to leave the square, so wondrous was the miracle they beheld, and so attentively did they listen to the sweet words of Christ's confessor. Remembering this, the saint himself left the square and told the people to disperse, promising to come to the square again in the morning, speak yet more fully about the holy faith, and teach them what they ought to do. Hermogenes, however, did not leave St. Mina, but spent the whole night with him, being instructed in the knowledge of the true God and the mysteries of the faith of Christ.

In the morning so many people from Alexandria gathered in the square that the whole square could not contain them. As St. Mina and Hermogenes approached the square, a great multitude of Hellenes met them, crying with one accord:

"We all believe in the God whom you preach; to Him alone we promise to serve, and we renounce all our former error."

In reply, the saint gave thanks to God, who turns hardened pagans to Himself and guides those who have gone astray into the way of truth. He praised them for their speedy conversion to God and comforted them with God-inspired instruction, teaching them to place their hope in the goodness of God, of which they would be deemed worthy in holy Baptism. When he had entered the square and taken his place there, the saint addressed all the people, saying:

"May God perfect you by His sign and make you ready for every good work!"

After this he told each of them to ask about God and learn whatever he wished. The judge answered on behalf of all the people: "Most holy man of God! We have no doubt whatever concerning your God. We have all come to know Him clearly, and therefore believe everything you have said. We ask only one thing: that we may be united to God through Baptism."

But some among the people, seeing Hermogenes turning to Christ, added:

Truly there is no respect of persons with God, for He made Himself known even to the pagan and showed mercy to him for his great generosity toward the poor.

Before long, bishops came to Alexandria from the surrounding places and deserts[6], some to visit their rational sheep, others desiring to see the ascetic labors of the martyrs; about thirty of them gathered. Then St. Mina, having prepared water, bade Hermogenes bow his head before the bishops. And they, pouring water upon his head, said:

"Hermogenes receives the bath of regeneration, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit[7]."

Thus the judge was baptized before the whole people, and all the people glorified Christ God. A multitude of the people was also baptized, and there was great joy in the whole city, for the faithful rejoiced in the Lord their God.

6. At this time, because of persecutions, the bishops of the Church, according to the needs of the Church, did not always remain among their flocks, but sometimes, for their good, so as not to deprive them of their spiritual guidance, they hid themselves in the deserts, appearing only rarely to edify and strengthen the flock. But when it was necessary to strengthen the flagging spirit of the faithful by their own example, then the hierarchs gave themselves over to the torments of their tormentors.

7. This form of holy baptism (by pouring, not by immersion) was not common in the ancient Church; it was used (and is still used) only in those exceptional cases when the required quantity of water cannot be obtained, especially for a large number of people, as in the present case, and in other similar extreme difficulties. – The expression "receives the bath of regeneration" is entirely equivalent to the usual expression "is baptized." It is borrowed from the Epistle of the Apostle Paul (Tit. 3:5) and signifies the thought that the water of baptism, washing the body, at the same time regenerates the man spiritually, destroying his sins, just as the bodily bath washes away bodily uncleanness.

A few days later Hermogenes was ordained bishop of the city of Alexandria, and at this time he distributed all his property among the needy. Together with his whole spiritual flock he began a resolute struggle against the devil: in a short time he destroyed the demonic shrines, overturning the idols, and in their place he founded churches, and he baptized an innumerable multitude of pagans and turned them to Christ. By invoking the name of Christ and making the sign of His holy Cross he healed every kind of sickness and cast unclean spirits out of men; he taught all people piety and purity, humility and love, meekness and the other virtues, setting an example to the flock by his own manner of life. While all this was taking place, a certain hard-hearted pagan named Rusticus, one of the members of the imperial synklitos[8], went to the emperor and told him of everything that had happened in Alexandria: how the eparch Hermogenes, following the teaching of Mina, had become a Christian, and how the whole Alexandrian people had followed Hermogenes and Mina, accepting the same faith. Emperor Maximinus, hearing of this, was greatly angered not only with Hermogenes and Mina but with the whole city of Alexandria; at once gathering himself, he set out for Alexandria, taking with him ten thousand armed soldiers. Arriving in the city, he immediately seized Mina and Hermogenes, and as soon as a place for judgment had been prepared, he commanded all the inhabitants of the city to assemble in the square, while he himself took the seat of judge. When the saints were brought before him for judgment, and by his order stripped naked, the tyrant, seeing them, cried out loudly:

"O gods! What does this mean, that those to whom we had shown special honor have willingly scorned it, choosing for themselves a base and unworthy life, and have become in appearance like some kind of buffoons?"

Then he began to speak to Hermogenes:

"Tell me, wretched man, why did I entrust to you authority over all this land and sea, if not so that you yourself would remain faithful to our gods and to us, and would bring Mina, who had gone astray into er-

8. Synklitos – the military and civil government, consisting of the most important and influential counselors and dignitaries.

ror, back to our ancestral religion? But you not only did not turn him back from his error, you yourself became his like-minded companion."

While the proud emperor was so enraged and blazing with vengeance, the All-good Heavenly King looked down from on high with favor upon His servants, for suddenly Angels appeared to them, instilling courage in them, preparing them for sufferings, and bidding them not to fear the emperor's wrath, since the final triumph would be on their side. Then Hermogenes said in reply to the emperor:

"Emperor! If you are willing to hear me with patience, I will explain to you why I freely rejected what seems to you the height of prosperity, and preferred to become, as it were, a foolish beggar, mocked and deprived of honor, that is, to become a Christian and to be ready to follow Christ into fire, sword, and the teeth of beasts, and even to desire death for His sake more than life. But only listen."

The emperor said to him in reply:

"If you will speak the truth to me, I will listen to you, but beware of speaking falsehood instead of truth."

And Hermogenes began to relate before him as follows:

"Emperor! I had an ardent desire to persecute the Christians and their teaching, to honor the pagan gods, and to obey your will; you know this, for you yourself sent me to this city in order to turn the wise Mina back to the ancient faith by enticements or threats. For this you sent me here with so great a military force that you yourself have now come with a smaller force. Let all the inhabitants of this city be witnesses before you to what I was at first, when by flattery, threats, and every other means I sought to turn Mina away from Christianity; I, the foolish one, did not know that I had met a man fearless and courageous, always ready to answer, with a heart longing rather to endure torments and all the most cruel sufferings than to renounce Christ. When I saw that he would not agree to worship the gods, did not fear authority, did not dread tortures, and did not heed exhortations, I subjected him to torments, for his conduct seemed to me an insult to the gods, all the more so because the people also sympathized with him, sharing all his views concerning the faith.

First I ordered his feet cut off down to the bones, then his tongue cut out and his eyes put out; and when he had grown weak from his wounds and was barely breathing, I ordered him cast into prison. To speak truly, I grieved bitterly in my soul for him, as for a fellow citizen, that such a wise and eloquent man should perish. In the morning I ordered his body carried out, supposing that he was already dead. And suddenly I see him alive: I see that he himself is walking toward me, looking with his eyes and speaking with his tongue. Seeing him, I thought it was an apparition, and therefore I closed my eyes so as not to see even the likeness of him who was an enemy of the gods. But when afterwards I rose from my place and, together with the others, began to examine attentively the one who had appeared, not trusting only my own eyes but also touching him with my hands, I became convinced that it was indeed Mina. And I was at once conquered by the truth, having as my unfailing witness my own conscience. Yet, emperor, here he himself stands before you! Here too is the people who saw his torment: let them bear witness before you, or else investigate for yourself, however you wish, whether this really is a miracle. Tell me, then, I beg you by your gods: if someone had seen, as I did, Christ so suddenly healing and raising a man to life and displaying His power in such a miracle, would he not understand that this is the One True God? He is the sole Creator of the first man, and He promised to those who believe in Him an eternal Kingdom in heaven. If someone had seen all this and understood it, would he really reject such a God and refuse to be called His friend? And would he reject such a grace-filled power, which enables a man, like God Himself, to give sight to the blind, heal the lame, move mountains, raise the dead, and move any created thing by a single word or a single gesture of his hand, while having hope of eternal blessedness and the Kingdom of Heaven? Would anyone who abandoned such a God and scorned such blessedness, preferring to honor your gods and be a ruler and emperor, seem wise to you? What opinion would you hold of such a man? Would he not seem to you a madman and an ignoramus, having no understanding of what is truly good and of true benefit? Therefore, emperor, I too have rejected all error, your fables and your abominable gods, and all the transitory vain goods, and

have turned to the One True God, preferring to appear in your eyes a madman, as you yourself called me, and to endure misfortune, rather than to be considered wise and chosen among you. So now you have heard all about us. If you wish to grasp the power of Christ, then test it at once in deed: devise for us some greatest torment; but if you cannot devise it, then allow me myself to point out to you the kinds of all possible tortures and to recall them before you, for I was for no small time a judge and a torturer, and therefore I am extraordinarily skilled in this matter. Give us to be devoured by beasts, cast us down from a mountain into an abyss, throw us into the sea, bury us alive in the earth, cut us down with the sword, burn us with fire; devise for each separate member of our body a fitting torment, for I too, when I was blinded by impiety, did all this to the holy Mina, my lamp, who led me to the knowledge of the truth."

While St. Hermogenes spoke so fearlessly before the emperor, the people marveled at his bold and courageous speech and confirmed that the miracle that had happened to the holy Mina had indeed taken place before the eyes of all. The emperor, however, could not say a single word in reply to Hermogenes. Knowing that if he entered into any lengthy dispute with Hermogenes he would only be put to shame and the gods humiliated, he immediately ordered Hermogenes's hands cut off at the shoulders and his feet at the knees, and the severed limbs thrown into the fire before the martyr's eyes, so that he himself might see how the members of his body would burn. But the martyr, lifting his head a little, seeing his hands and feet in the fire, said:

"How happy I am that God accepts as a sacrifice and offering to Him those very hands which I once raised in supplication to false gods, and those very feet with which I walked on the path of error!"

Then his belly was pierced with a spear, and all his entrails spilled out; and the executioners, at the emperor's command, threw the remains of his still barely breathing body into the river. As for St. Mina, the emperor was afraid to put him to the test in words, lest he be shamed by his bold account of the miracles, of which he had already heard for certain, and lest through this he should cause the remaining people who shared his faith to fall away from their faith in his gods.

Therefore he straightway, without any questioning, commanded that Mina be led off to a dark dungeon and hanged there, his hands bound, and a very large stone tied to his feet; the emperor did this with the purpose of putting Mina to death by a violent end, after a prolonged hanging, when all the joints of his body would be stretched by the great weight. But St. Mina, enduring all this, had upon his lips the words of the psalm: "Behold mine affliction and my travail" (Ps. 24:18), and the words of the Apostle: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

Then, when all the joints of the holy martyr's body had been wrenched from their places and his whole body had been stretched out like a string, and the torment was thereby greatly intensified, he fell silent. But God, who displays His wondrous power in His saints, not only did not abandon the passion-bearers during their torments, but also wrought a striking miracle with them: at God's divine command, as soon as St. Hermogenes, barely alive, was cast into the river, the holy Angels appeared at once; they took him out of the water and carried him to the shore; they healed his severed hands and feet and made him wholly well and unharmed, as though he had just now been born anew as a man. And when night came, they led him to St. Mina, who was hanging in the dungeon and was barely alive; there they freed St. Mina also from his fetters, and having healed him, they comforted both of them with the recompense awaiting them in heaven, telling them that crowns were already prepared there for them, and that the Author of their contest Himself was waiting until they bravely finished their struggle. Thus strengthening them for their sufferings, the Angels remained with the martyrs until the morning.

As soon as day dawned, the emperor very early commanded that all the people gather in the square. Then, coming himself, he sat upon his throne, and knowing that the whole city already believed in Christ, he was divided in his thoughts, saying to himself: "It is not well to leave the townspeople unpunished, but it is useless to punish them all with death." Therefore, feigning as though he knew nothing of their faith in Christ, he began to address the people with such a speech:

"I know that all of you both offer sacrifices and worship our great gods, and that you render to your kings all due obedience with fear; but since from the very beginning you did not rise up against these abominable men who dared to spread the teaching of the Crucified One, and did not stone them before our coming to you, through this you have brought upon yourselves the great wrath of the gods. Although I myself do not wish any of you to fall into any calamity permitted by the gods, nevertheless I cannot leave you without any punishment at all; and therefore, avenging upon you the provoking of the gods, I command that your city be stripped of its long-standing honor, so that none of you may henceforth either receive a higher rank or attain to high authority. Know also that the Crucified One not only delivers no one from misfortunes, but on the contrary brings those who believe in Him to every kind of calamity and to a shameful death. And that everything I have said is true, let the two sorcerers of yesterday, Hermogenes and Mina, be witnesses of it, who before their torment promised to raise the dead, and yet, having been punished by me for their own guilt with severe torments, were not able to help even themselves. Where, then, is the power of this seducer, Christ?"

While the emperor was speaking these shameful words and reviling the name of Christ, the whole people were indignant and murmured among themselves, plotting something new against the emperor himself. But no sooner had the heralds given the people a sign to be silent, and the emperor had only just wished to address the people again, than suddenly the holy Mina and Hermogenes appeared before the emperor. All turned their gaze upon them with astonishment and cried out as though with one tongue and one voice:

"Truly there is only one God, the God of the Christians!"

Seeing them, the emperor was struck with great amazement and terror.

At this time one of those standing among the people, named Eugraphus, a man learned in the Greek sciences and himself one of the scribes at the time when St. Mina governed the city as judge, this Eugraphus, seeing the holy martyrs alive and well, was filled with divine zeal, and, making the sign of the Cross over himself, boldly came out

into the middle of the square and stood before the emperor, saying to him:

"Emperor! I too am a Christian, and I do not heed your commands; behold, I am before you and I spare not my body for Christ. Do not think to conquer me with threats or with flattery; and not me alone, but none of us Christians can you overcome: for for us to dwell with you is equivalent to death, while to die for Christ truly means to gain life. You came into our city like a lion, desiring to devour the flock of Christ and to destroy the holy faith by idolatry, but we despise your rage, we are ready to go to death for piety, and we laugh at you as at a flattering fox."

Hearing this, the emperor was inflamed with anger, and quickly leaping from his throne, he rushed upon the Christians; snatching a sword from one of those standing before him, he with his own hands cut down St. Eugraphus, and in great rage began to hack him into pieces. The saint, while being cut apart, continued, as long as he could, to reproach the tormentor for his impiety, and at the same time to thank God that he was going to Him before the others, and that he was dying not by a single beheading, but from numerous wounds, which inspired in him the hope of many crowns from God. Thus he gave up his soul into the hands of God, being cut to pieces in the middle of the square.

The emperor, seating himself again upon his throne, turned to the holy martyrs Mina and Hermogenes and said:

"I swear by the power of my gods that I have never yet seen such sorcerers as these! It is no wonder that the common people listen to them, for by beguiling the ignorant with their crafty sorcery, they turn them away from their gods and inspire in them the resolve to die for the Crucified One. Therefore I shall now expose you, wretched men: whether you are phantoms that merely darken the eyes, or in truth renewed bodies."

To this the saints replied:

"Since your mind is senseless, your soul blinded, and your heart hardened, therefore even a real object appears to you as a phantom; for are you not truly blind, if you do not believe a deed that shines more

brightly than the sun itself? If you doubt, then test with all care whether it is really we; and if in anger you threaten, then test us again by means of torments and wounds, and know that we are flesh, not a phantom. If you wish to draw us to yourself through the promise of temporal goods, know that even if you were to give us your very kingdom, which among you is esteemed more precious than all things, you would not entice us even with that. Therefore pronounce your final sentence upon us, and know that you will conquer us in nothing."

The emperor, seeing that these were not phantoms but living men, for many had touched them with their hands and had ascertained that their bodies were free of wounds, commanded that their heads be cut off; and he himself, rising, withdrew to his palace, shamed that he could in no way overcome the warriors of Christ. When the saints were led to the place of execution, all the people followed after them; and they, lifting their eyes to heaven, stood for a long while so, praying to God that He would grant peace and tranquillity to the churches and to all Christianity, and that none who asked help of them should return unhelped; then, embracing one another and bidding each other farewell, they bowed their honorable heads beneath the sword and were beheaded by a soldier. And since the great Mina, while still living, had asked the emperor that his body be buried in Byzantium (which he had also charged the faithful who stood about him before his death to carry out), Emperor Maximin commanded that an iron chest be made, and, placing the bodies of the holy martyrs into it, that it be cast into the sea, so that Christians would have no opportunity to venerate them. He himself, seeing the popular talk and the great murmuring of the people against him, hastily departed from the city and set out for Byzantium, fearing lest a revolt might rise against him.

Meanwhile the iron chest with the relics of the holy martyrs did not sink in the sea, but, guided upon the waters by the power of God, it outstripped the emperor himself and swiftly reached Byzantium, speeding as though with the swiftness of a flying bird. And the Bishop of Byzantium had during the night a certain divine vision, commanding him to go at once to the seashore and to receive the chest with the relics of the saints with honor. The bishop, that same night, summoning

his clergy and some distinguished people from among the faithful townsfolk, went out with them to the sea; and they all saw a light descending from heaven upon the sea in the form of a pillar and coming down into some boat; in that boat sat two radiant men, sailing toward the shore on which the bishop stood with the clergy.

When those who were swimming drew near the shore, those standing on the shore saw that it was not a boat but an ark, borne over the water by two radiant Angels, who at once became invisible as soon as they set the ark upon the shore. The bishop and the people, receiving the ark with joy and learning that it was of iron, were greatly astonished that so great a weight of iron had not sunk into the depths of the sea, but floated over the waters like light wood. Having kissed the honorable relics of the holy martyrs, they laid them for the time being in a secret place.

But Emperor Maximinus, who was still on his way, was struck by the punishment of God: though spiritually blind for a long time, he lost also the eyes of the body, and he himself related to his household and friends that he had been punished by some invisible hands; a few days after this the impious man died. After the emperor's death the bishop, with great honor, buried the relics of the holy martyrs near the city wall, that they might be as guardians of the city, keepers of those who sail the seas, and physicians of those afflicted with diseases, to the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen[9].

Troparion, Tone 8:

Having put to death the aspects and motions of the flame of passions by abstinence, O Christ's martyrs, ye received grace to drive away the infirmities of the weak; and living, and even after your repose, ye work wonders. Truly a glorious wonder, that your naked bones send forth healings: glory to the One God and Creator.

9. The holy martyrs suffered their martyrdom around 313 A.D. – The uncovering of the relics of St. Mina the martyr (which occurred later, in the 11th century) is celebrated on February 17. St. Mina, for his eloquence, is also known under the name Kallikeladas (Fair-spoken). – In the 9th century Joseph the Hymnographer wrote a canon in honor of these martyrs, where mention is also made of healings from their relics.

Kontakion, Tone 1:

Let us all honor with sacred sweet hymns wondrous Mina, divine Hermogenes, and Eugraphus together, who honored the Lord, suffered for Him, attained the choir of the bodiless ones in heaven, and pour forth wonders.

* * *

Commemoration of St. Hemellus

Память святого Гемелла

St. Hemellus was from the region of Paphlagonia[10]. Hearing that Emperor Julian the Apostate[11] was in the Galatian city of Ancyra[12], he went there, and standing before the emperor, fearlessly reproached him for apostasy and enmity against the holy Christian faith. Julian fell into a violent rage and subjected him to cruel torments. An iron hoop, heated to such a degree that burning sparks flew from it, was placed upon Hemellus, and blood flowed from the body of the martyr. In this state he was sent to the city of Edessa[13], whither the apostate himself also came. When the holy martyr was brought to this city, his shoulders were torn with red-hot iron stakes, iron nails were driven into his head; then he was stretched upon the ground and his skin was stripped from his feet to his head. Finally he was crucified, and his feet were nailed to the cross. Thus this much-suffering one departed, giving thanks to God[14].

* * *

10. Paphlagonia – an ancient region of Asia Minor, on the southern shore of the Black Sea.
11. Emperor Julian reigned from 361 to 363 A.D. Having become emperor, he fell away from the Christian faith and made the restoration of paganism the aim of his life, for which he is known by the name the Apostate.
12. Ancyra – the chief city of the Asia Minor region of Galatia, now Ankara, a considerable city of Asia Minor with a population of 30,000. Galatia occupied the very middle of the Asia Minor peninsula; Ancyra was located on the northwestern outskirts of the province.
13. Edessa – a city of Cilicia, a southeastern region of Asia Minor.
14. The martyric death of St. Hemellus followed around 361 A.D.

Commemoration of our Venerable Father Thomas of Defurkin[15]

Память преподобного Фомы Дефуркина

The Venerable Thomas was born in Bithynia[16]. His parents were of common rank and lived in comfort. But Thomas, from his early years, turned away from all worldly, vain pleasures and showed a strong inclination toward the monastic life. Drawn by the exemplary life of a certain monk who labored in one of the neighboring monasteries, he attached himself in spirit to the holy monastery; from childhood he accustomed himself to observe the fast, and, gladly occupying himself with the book learning proper to childhood, he learned the Psalter, the Apostolic writings, and the entire church service. Thus Thomas's early life passed peacefully, in piety, and the good seeds sown in his soul had time to take root for further growth. When this God-fearing youth reached full age, he put on the monastic garb and, with unshakable firmness, entered upon the struggle of spiritual warfare against the enemy of salvation. And he so established and perfected his soul in virtuous living that his spiritual beauty was clearly manifest before all.

At that time one of the Byzantine nobles, named Galoliktus, founded a new monastery by the river Sagaris and asked the bishop of that region to gather into this monastery men most worthy and wise. The Venerable Thomas was chosen and appointed head of this new community, as an experienced monk, established in the spiritual life and a firm keeper of abstinence. This was reported also to the council of bishops, with the explanation that Thomas had been laboring in spiritual exercise for many years, and that all regarded him as a vessel filled with various virtues, although he himself, out of humility, strove to conceal this from others.

Meanwhile, this unexpected appointment of the blessed Thomas as head of the monastery, through the devil's instigation and by the per-

15. This was a nickname given to the Venerable Thomas.
16. Bithynia – a northwestern region of Asia Minor, lying along the shores of the Black Sea, the Bosphorus and the Straits of Constantinople.

mission of God the Provider, gave occasion for some discord. Grieved by this, Thomas, accusing himself, said to himself with reproach:

"What am I dreaming about myself!"

And realizing that the time had come for the fulfillment of his cherished desires, having taken leave of the brethren, confessed before them the sorrow of his heart, and given them spiritual consolation, he withdrew from the monastery to silence in a certain desert. Left without a head, like sheep without a shepherd, the monks desired the return of the Venerable Father; they set out to seek him and searched for a long time until they reached that very desert where the Venerable Father had settled, enduring in silence both winter's cold and summer's heat, counting the first as warmth and the second as coolness. And they besought the Venerable Father to return to the monastery, and to calm his grief they said:

"Why do you wear yourself out with so harsh a life? Consider: we are created of earthly dust, and for that very reason we bear weakness within us, so that it is not in our power to free ourselves altogether from the weakness proper to us."

But Thomas remained unyielding and only, yielding to the desire of the monks, allowed them to build for him a small cell. When it was built, the Venerable Father entered it and, kneeling upon the earth, said:

"Let this be pleasing to Thee, O Lord; and grant that the men who came to my unworthiness may be enabled to return."

The monks departed, leaving their spiritual leader in desert solitude. But after that, as if by a special summons, pious people began to come to the holy ascetic from all sides, laymen desiring to receive the monastic tonsure, and they asked the Venerable Father to allow them to live with him in obedience. All such as came to serve the Lord he clothed in the monastic garb, and two of them, as the first disciples of Christ, he named with the names of Apostles, giving one the name John and the other Peter, and with them he offered most fervent prayers to God.

But for the author of evil, the devil, it was unbearable to see his snares and plots defeated. And so they first sent upon the Venerable Father gnats in such multitude that the blessed one could not even

speak: the gnats attacked him both when he lay down and when he rose to pray, crowding into his mouth, penetrating even to his throat. And his scanty food, and everything in the saint's cell, was always full of gnats. Three years this affliction lasted, but the Venerable Father not only endured it without murmuring or sighing, but even gave thanks to God, begging for the forgiveness of his sins. Then, by God's will, the attack of the gnats ceased, and large flies appeared, which bit the Venerable Father and pierced his body, worn down by abstinence, as if with sharp arrows. This affliction also passed, lasting likewise three years. But after that ants attacked the Venerable Father, crawling into his eyes and nostrils, yet he, like a sturdy oak, remained unshaken in the struggle of patience he had undertaken. Seeing such firmness of the blessed elder, who endured these nine years of afflictions, as if transient, lasting but a day, the tempter attacked him with still greater and more frenzied malice. Knowing that man, honored from creation with the image of God, has by nature an aversion to the serpent, the instrument of the first sin (Gen. 3:1–6, 14–15), the deceiver, in order to destroy the peace of soul of the Venerable Father and to instill a feeling of bitterness in his heart, as well as in that of his companions, sent upon him a multitude of serpents. This may seem incredible to many, but it was not some mere apparition. The serpents appeared not in the imagination of the Venerable Thomas, but in reality crept up, surrounded him, and not once or twice, but constantly.

And not for one year or two, but for a full eleven years the saint was surrounded by them, and not once did he utter a murmur. The serpents did not even leave his bed free; they nested there too during his rest. But, guarded by the providence of God, the Venerable Father remained unharmed by them.

Once the blessed Father was performing the bloodless Divine service; the service was drawing to its end, and suddenly from somewhere a huge serpent crept out and, like a ring, encircled the entire church in which the sacred rite was being performed. The monk who was serving the Venerable Father had gone out of the church just before, to bring the hot water needed for the rite, and the serpent, at first encircling the church, at this time coiled itself at the threshold of the church, forming

an enormous coil. And then a wondrous miracle occurred: the Venerable Father who was celebrating the service, wondering why the hot water was not brought in good time as usual, looked around and saw the monster lying at the threshold, and the monk who served him standing in trembling terror; and, filled with the Holy Spirit, he said to the brother:

"Come in and do not be afraid."

He himself continued the holy work. Encouraged by the fatherly command, the monk, as if on wings, leapt over the serpent and entered the church. When the Divine service was over, the blessed elder, in his sacred vestments, approached the threshold where the monster lay, and said:

"If this appearance of yours here, O serpent, signifies your end by the help of my God, then follow me."

The serpent seized the hem of the saint's garment with its teeth and followed him. Thomas withdrew from the church to a distance of a bowshot, and, entering a thicket where there was a deep pit, he stopped and began to pray. To his many prayers he added this one:

"O God, who hast given power to those who believe in Thee to tread upon serpents and scorpions, vouchsafe, O Lord, that I, the least, may likewise tread upon the throat of the serpent, according to Thy word!" (Lk. 10:19)

As soon as the Venerable Father uttered this prayer, the serpent at once rose from its place and plunged into the abyss; and with it the edges of that abyss collapsed, so that a level hollow was formed in that place. Giving thanks to God, the elder returned to his cell. Then followed yet another wondrous miracle: the snakes that had nested beneath the Venerable Father's cell and had terrified him for so many years, at the sight of his holy face, as though fleeing from a fiery scorching, suddenly all departed to the place where the serpent-monster had perished. There, by the will of God, a great multitude of them perished, and birds fell upon them and devoured them.

From that time on, St. Thomas, delivered from temptation and affliction, received from God the gift of healing and of prophecy; but at the same time he cared with still greater zeal for his spiritual perfec-

tion, directing his attention especially to the keeping of the ascetic labor of silence. And since those who sought instruction came to him unceasingly and compelled him to break his silence, he began habitually to withdraw to the high ground of his desert. The disciples he had chosen beforehand and who were close to him, in accordance with his testament, guided both the brethren and the visitors: John oversaw the performance of prayers and church services, while Peter edified others by the gracious gift of foresight. And although all this was so arranged, the spiritual power of paternal guidance was not weakened by it, for in everything one will was manifested: the will of the elder-father governed all, and by his love all were lifted up and directed on the path of salvation.

When in this way everything in the secluded monastery went on in its established order, once the pious Greek emperor Leo, son of Basil[17], having in his heart a certain perplexity, set it down in a letter, and sealing it with his imperial seal, dispatched it by a special envoy to the Venerable Elder, desiring to receive from him the resolution of his perplexity. The imperial envoy set out, and as soon as he approached the threshold of the blessed father's cell, the latter, coming out to meet him, handed him his sealed letter and said:

"Take this, brother, and return to him who sent you."

Such an occurrence struck the messenger with terror, and in his bewilderment he objected:

"What answer shall I give to him who sent me concerning his written inquiry, when you have not even taken the imperial writing into your hands?"

To this the Venerable Father replied:

"Enough, child: so God wills."

Having received the epistle from St. Thomas, the messenger returned and told the emperor what had happened, and this greatly astonished him. When the emperor read the elder's answer and found in it the resolution of his perplexity, he expressed a firm desire to see the Venerable Father in person. But Thomas shunned the world, and in his

17. Leo VI the Wise, son of Basil the Macedonian. Byzantine emperor, reigned 886–911 A.D.

humility he avoided presenting himself to the emperor. Of this, indeed, only later and briefly did one of his disciples report. Whoever had any spiritual need approached the Venerable Father without fear, not troubled by distance of place or time, and received the spiritual consolation he sought, as well as bodily health. Thus, guiding many in the spiritual life for many years, and having attained a deep old age, the Venerable Father, after a brief illness, gave up his spirit to God[18].

* * *



18. Venerable Thomas Defurkin reposed in the 10th century.

THE ELEVENTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 11

11 декабря

New Calendar December 11 · Old Calendar December 24 (civil dates)

Life of Our Venerable Father Daniel the Stylite

Житие преподобного отца нашего Даниила Столпника

Our Venerable Father Daniel the Stylite, that paradise branch, was nurtured by Mesopotamia.[1] He was born in a village called Vifara, lying near the city of Samosata,[2] to Christian parents, Elias and Martha. His mother was barren and bore no children, and on account of this she had to endure much vexation and reproach, both from her husband and from the taunts of her kinsmen and kinswomen. One night at midnight, in a state of heartfelt sorrow, she quietly left her house and, stretching her hands toward heaven, addressed God with this prayer, shed with many tears:

"O Lord, King! Thou didst from the beginning create man and woman and say to them: Be fruitful and multiply. Thou gavest Sarah Isaac in her old age (Gen. 1:28), Anna Samuel (1 Kgdms. 1:20), Elizabeth John (Lk. 20:60). Have mercy then upon my misfortune likewise; look graciously upon me, release me from my barrenness, take away my reproach and give fruit to my barren womb, that I may bring what Thou hast given back to Thee as an offering, as Anna once brought Samuel to Thee.

Having prayed thus, with a contrite heart and a humble spirit, Martha returned to her house, and no sooner had she fallen asleep alone than she saw in a dream two large and very bright lights, resem-

1. Mesopotamia (in Greek, "between the rivers") is the land lying between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. Here, according to the biblical account and the tradition of other peoples, was the Paradise, the dwelling place of the first-created men.

2. Samosata was the chief city of the Syrian province of Commagene, on the western bank of the river Euphrates.

bling a dish, gradually descending from heaven onto her head. In the morning, rising, she told her husband and her kinsfolk of the vision, and they each in their own way tried to interpret her dream. Yet this wondrous dream was a foretoken that a son would be born of her who would, by the radiance of his virtues, as it were eclipse the very stars. Soon after this Martha conceived in her womb and bore a son; by this birth she was freed from the sorrow that had caused her such grief, her barrenness. So significant was the beginning of the blessed Daniel's life on earth, and so wondrously did he who was afterward to become truly a son of light come into the world.

Until he was five years old the boy grew up without a name, for his parents did not wish to give their son a name themselves, but desired that he who had been born by God's gift should receive his name from God as well. Therefore they brought him to a certain monastery, bringing gifts to God also, and asked the abbot to name their son. The abbot, inspired by God, answered that he must be named with the name that God Himself would reveal. Looking at the boy, he ordered a book to be brought to him from the church sanctuary, and opening it, he found in it certain words of the holy prophet Daniel. Understanding from this that God Himself had been pleased to ordain that the name of this prophet should also be given to the boy, he named him Daniel. This was a foreshadowing that this child would be like the great prophet, both in name and in piety. His parents wished that their son be dedicated at once to the service of God at this monastery, but the abbot did not consent, because the boy was still too young. Therefore the parents returned home with him, by God's providence, so that this boy might afterward choose a good life not at the wish of others but by his own understanding and of his own free will. Yet even from the child's growth one could judge that a virtuous man would come from him, just as a good tree, from the day it is planted, already gives signs of the fruit that will follow; the covering of virtue accompanied him everywhere, for he walked in the light of God's grace.

When the boy was twelve years old, he left his father's house, telling no one of his departure or his intention. He had by then resolved wholly to forsake, for Christ's sake, his parents, his homeland, his

kinsfolk and his friends, and he set out for a monastery situated at a distance of twenty stadia[3] from his native village. Falling on his knees before the abbot, Daniel implored him to receive him among the brethren and to tonsure him into the angelic image.[4]

But the abbot, pointing to the weakness of his strength and the youthfulness of the applicant, answered Daniel that, being still a very young boy, he would not be able to bear the many labors of monastic life, which are hard even for grown men: such as unceasing vigils, prostrations to the earth, fasting, bodily chastity, and the complete renunciation of one's own will and of every fleshly desire. Therefore he advised the boy to return to his parents and remain with them for some time, rather than undertake labors that exceed his young strength.

"I came here for this very purpose," Daniel answered the abbot, "to live for Christ and to die to the world. Even if I should die from the most perfect monastic exploits, it would still be incomparably better than to depart from here empty-handed; and, to use the words of the Gospel, 'no man, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God' (Lk. 9:62)."

The abbot again long admonished Daniel to abandon his intention, but he heard many objections from him as well. At last, unable to dissuade Daniel from his purpose, and seeing in him a firm resolve and a sincere love for God, the abbot gathered the brethren and consulted with them whether so young a boy might be received into the monastery. The brethren, marveling at the boy's courage and the steadfastness of his spirit, and perceiving in him a call from God, consented to receive him into their common life. Daniel, for his part, burned in spirit, advanced in virtue, and lived in a manner pleasing to God.

Meanwhile, after some time had passed, Daniel's parents learned that he was in that monastery. They rejoiced, but at the same time they marveled that so young a boy had given himself of his own accord to the service of God. Going to him and finding him not yet tonsured, still moving among the monks without the monastic garb, they began to ask

3. A stadion is about 88 sazhens; 20 stadia are a little more than 3.5 versts.

4. This is called the tonsure into the angelic (monastic) rank, for the chief purpose of monasticism is the imitation of the bodiless orders through prayer and ascetic labor.

the abbot to tonsure their son before their eyes and clothe him in the monastic habit. On a Sunday, after consulting with the brethren, the abbot tonsured Daniel into the monastic order, but he did not allow his parents to visit their son often. After this they returned joyfully to their house; the blessed Daniel, however, advanced and grew strong in spirit, increasing not only in years but in virtues.

The beginning of this wondrous life, and the source of all that followed from it, was the following. Daniel's heart was kindled with divine love, and he conceived an irresistible desire to venerate the holy places where our Lord Jesus Christ suffered for us, where He was buried and rose, and whence He ascended into heaven. At the same time he burned in spirit to see the great ascetic of that time, St. Symeon the Stylite. Coming to the abbot, he disclosed to him his desire and asked to be released to make the journey he had chosen. On this occasion the abbot kept Daniel back; but later, having himself need to go to Antioch[8300] on church business, he took Daniel along with several other brethren. When they came to a village called Tilanissa, not far from which St. Symeon the Stylite was living as an ascetic, they went to his pillar. They saw the harshness of that region and the height of the pillar, and learned that, despite everything, this ascetic endured on his pillar the winter cold, the summer heat, the winds and the rains. Some foolish people thought that the saint endured all this out of vainglory; but the blessed Daniel not only marveled at his patience, but was himself moved to imitate him. When the monks who had come, standing below, called out, St. Symeon, looking down at them from above, ordered a ladder to be set up so that they might come up to him if they wished. Then it became evident how each one regarded the venerable man: one pleaded sore feet, another declined on account of old age, and others held back for various other infirmities; Daniel, however, mounting the ladder, climbed quickly and joyfully greeted the great Symeon. Nor were his labors in vain, for first he heard instruction from the ascetic and was through it moved yet further toward a virtuous life; then Daniel was granted the blessing given by the laying on of hands, and finally he heard from him about his future life. The ascetic, addressing him, spoke prophetically:

"Take courage, child, and let thy heart be strengthened, for thou art destined to take upon thyself, for Christ's sake, labors hard to bear; but Christ Himself will be thy Helper in all things: He will strengthen and comfort thy spirit."

After such a conversation with the saint, full of love and of considerable length, the blessed Daniel came down, and then returned to the monastery.

Some time later, when the abbot of that monastery departed to the Lord, the brethren pressed Daniel to accept the abbot's authority after him, but he, naming another in his place, began himself to seek solitude, saying to himself:

"Behold, Daniel, thou hast become free, and the time has come for the fulfilment of that to which thou didst formerly so strive; therefore go forth along the desired path and accomplish thy purpose."

Having so decided, Daniel left the monastery secretly and came to the enclosure that stood near the pillar of St. Simeon. Having stayed there fourteen days, he was already about to depart. But St. Simeon, loving Daniel, advised him to remain with him. Daniel, however, having a strong desire to see the holy places in Jerusalem and to withdraw into the inner desert for the ascetic labor of silence, set out on his way toward Palestine. In Palestine at that time there were wars: the Samaritans had risen against the Christians, and for this reason the road through that region was unsafe. Daniel knew all this, yet he disregarded it all, and with a firm purpose and a fearless heart, not dreading death, began his journey, wholly possessed by the one strong desire to complete the road he had long since marked out. Having gone a considerable distance, he met a certain venerable monk, advanced in years, of goodly appearance, with gray hair, resembling in every way the Venerable Simeon Stylites. Embracing Daniel, the elder asked him in Syriac where he was going. Daniel replied that, if God blessed it, he was going to the holy places. The elder said:

"You have spoken rightly, if God blesses it; but now know for certain that your present journey is not with God's blessing. Have you not heard of the uprisings and strife in Palestine?"

Daniel answered:

"I have heard, but I hope in God: He will be my helper, and therefore I think that nothing evil will befall me; and if anything such should befall me, I am not afraid, for 'whether we live or die, we are the Lord's' (Rom. 14:8)."

But in reply the elder brought to Daniel a prophetic word: "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; he that keepeth thee will not slumber" (Ps. 120:3), the Angel.

Daniel, answering the elder, expressed his readiness to die even for Christ during this journey.

Then the elder, in anger, turned his face away from him and said:

"God has not commanded us to expose ourselves to untimely death and, as it were against our will, to go to certain death, when He said: 'When they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another' (Mt. 10:23)."

Daniel began to incline to the elder's counsel and said to him:

"If, Father, it seems so to you, I am ready to return."

The elder answered:

"I advise you not to abandon your purpose altogether, but I only point out that it would be unwise for you to go there in the present unfavorable time. Go now to Byzantium, which by the abundance of its sanctuaries is a second Jerusalem, whose grace now rests upon it by the command of God; there you may visit very many churches and be satisfied by contemplating many holy things. If you resolve to devote yourself to the ascetic labor of silence, whether in upper Thrace or at the very mouth of the sea, it will be salutary for you, and God will help you in this. In general, beloved, one should not think that you can find God in Jerusalem and not in Byzantium, for God is not confined by any space."

While they were thus conversing with one another, the sun began to set, and on their way there met them a monastery, to which it was necessary to turn aside from the road for the night; they directed themselves to this monastery. The elder said to Daniel:

"Go on ahead, and I will follow after you."

Daniel thought that the elder needed to stop for some reason, and he went on ahead, and, coming to the gates of the monastery, sat down

to wait for the elder. But since the elder did not appear, Daniel thought that he had gone to lodge somewhere else. Entering the monastery, he greeted the abbot and the brethren and partook of the food set before him. When he then fell asleep, that same elder again appeared to him in a dream and again began to counsel him: to do what he had told him during the journey, and to make haste toward Byzantium. Awakening from sleep and seeing no one near him, Daniel pondered who it was that had appeared to him: a man or an Angel. It was Simeon, the great pillar-saint.

After such a vision, Daniel, having performed the morning prayers and wished peace to the monks dwelling in that monastery, set out toward Byzantium.

Arriving at the seashore, the Venerable Father entered the church of the holy Archangel Michael, Voivode of the heavenly hosts, and remained in it for seven days. Here he heard that in Anaplus[5] there was an empty idol temple in which many unclean spirits dwelt, so that no one could pass by that place: they drowned in the water those who sailed, and attacked those who passed by, like brigands, and killed them. Hearing this, the saint resolved to go there and live there, recalling the great Antony, who had endured much evil from the demons and, at last, by the help of God overcoming them, was granted great honors. Therefore Daniel went into the empty temple[6], armed with the one invincible weapon of the holy Cross, and at the same time singing: "The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear?" (Ps. 26:1). Even before the struggle the host of demons was already filled with terror. And this spiritual warrior, going round the corners of the temple, sealed them with the sign of the cross, each time kneeling and praying to God. When evening came, the chief of the demons came and began to cast stones at the saint; then a terrible roaring and wailing was heard, and a tumult arose; but Daniel, standing fearlessly in prayer, said: "Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, even then will I hope" (Ps.

5. Anaplus is a suburb of Constantinople.
6. This was during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Leo I, in the second half of the 5th century.

26:3). Thus he spent the first and second nights. But on the third night he saw a multitude of demons in the form of enormous giants, with gloomy faces, terrible as man-eaters, gnashing their teeth, inflamed with anger against the saint, and saying:

"Who, unhappy one, advised you to come here, where we, having long dwelt, are the masters of this place?"

Saying this, they rushed upon Daniel, some desiring to cast him into the sea, others striving to stone him; yet not one of them dared to approach the saint. The saint, however, remembering the Lord's words, "this kind can come out by nothing but by prayer and fasting" (Mk. 9:29), acted thus: closing all the entrances of the temple, he left only one small window, and himself began to fast and pray. In a short time the whole host of demons was driven out of there by the power of God, and the people began to pass by that place without any danger. This became known everywhere, and many of the neighboring inhabitants began to come to St. Daniel, marveling that in the very place where the abode of the demons had been, the praise of God resounded day and night. But the devil, hating good and not wishing to see himself overcome by the saint, put envy into some of the clergy, and they began to say among themselves:

"Where did he come from, that everyone goes to him and glorifies him everywhere? Let us go and slander him to the patriarch, that he may remove him from here."

Going to the Patriarch of Constantinople, Anatolius[7], they slandered the saint to him. But the patriarch answered them:

"Why do you slander a man of whom you do not know whence he is or what his life is? If he leads a righteous life, we too ought to become imitators of his holiness; but if he lives impiously, he doubtless deserves exile. Yet he must not be exiled at once, but only after careful preliminary examination."

Put to shame by this answer of the patriarch, the slanderers were obliged to be silent.

The devil, however, seeing the failure of his cunning, began to trouble the saint with apparitions and terrors even stronger than be-

fore, as if rushing upon him with his whole host: now trying to drown him in the sea, now boasting that he would kill him. But the devil did not succeed in harming the saint in the least. Standing in prayer, Daniel cried out to God:

"My Lord Jesus Christ, in whom I believe, He will sink you yourselves into the abysses of hell."

No sooner had he said this than cries and wails were heard, as of weeping beings, and the saint saw the demons flying like bats and departing from that place. But even after this the demons did not cease to cause the saint grief; they again stirred up slanderers against him, who, coming to the patriarch, said:

"Vladyka! Daniel is a sorcerer and a deceiver; he beguiles the people by sorcery, and therefore we cannot endure him."

The patriarch, summoning Daniel, asked him who he was, whence he came, why he had come into these lands, and how he believed in God. Daniel at once confessed his Orthodox faith, then told of his country and origin, and also that he had come to Byzantium, having been called by a revelation of God. Hearing this, the patriarch rose and embraced him, honoring him as a man of God, and then dismissed him in peace. A few days later that patriarch fell into a grievous illness; at once, summoning Daniel to him, he asked him to pray to God that he, the patriarch, might be healed. As soon as the saint had prayed, the patriarch immediately rose up healthy; the physician, however, who had asked no fee, requested for the healing only that the patriarch forgive those persons who had slandered him before the patriarch. The patriarch said:

"How could I not forgive those who became the authors of so great a good, that I was granted both to see you and to receive healing through you."

The patriarch asked the saint to remain with him, but Daniel preferred to be sent back to his place, and, coming there, again shut the doors behind him, leaving only a small opening for those who came to him.

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7. Anatolius was Patriarch of Constantinople from 449 to 458.

After nine years of such a harsh life, God was pleased to summon the Venerable one to a still more perfect struggle. A special revelation from God came to him for this purpose: in a vision he saw before him a pillar whose height surpassed the clouds; atop the pillar stood St. Simeon, with two radiant youths beside him. And he heard the Stylite's voice speaking from the height of the pillar:

"Daniel! Come up here to me."

Daniel seemed to answer:

"My lord! How can I climb to such a height?"

Then the Venerable Simeon commanded the two youths to descend to Daniel, take him, and bring him up. The youths at once carried out his command and set Daniel before Simeon. The Venerable one embraced Daniel and called to him in a loud voice:

"Be courageous, Daniel! Be magnanimous and strong! Stand firm and bravely!"

As St. Simeon spoke these words, his voice seemed like thunder, and at its sound Daniel awoke. This vision foretold that Daniel, too, must ascend a pillar, like St. Simeon the Stylite, and draw near to him in body and soul.

At that time Sergius, a disciple of the Venerable Simeon the Stylite, came from Antioch to the emperor, bringing him the koukoulion[8] of the Venerable Simeon, sent as a gift to protect the emperor from every evil. But since the emperor's soul was set upon earthly concerns and he was wholly absorbed in worldly affairs, Sergius resolved to leave him and return; he also wished to visit the Monastery of the Sleepless Ones.[9] As he and his companions sailed past the place where the Venerable Daniel was struggling, some recalled him and the patience with which he lived, as well as the gift he had received from God to heal diseases and drive out demons. Hearing this, Sergius ordered the ship to put in to shore

8. The *kukul* (from Greek, "little cap") was originally a common monastic head covering, serving as a symbol of silence, purity and gentleness, of quiet abiding in contemplation and of the most careful attention to oneself; sometimes a cross was sewn onto the kukul. Later, as now, the kukul became the exclusive mark of schemamonks who have received the Great Schema. It is used instead of the klobuk, which is placed over the kamilavka at the first tonsure into monasticism and differs from the klobuk in that it covers the head and shoulders all round; its top is pointed, with five crosses.

and went to the Venerable Daniel. Daniel welcomed him warmly, and after a long conversation Sergius became convinced that the spirit of Simeon rested upon Daniel, as the spirit of Elijah had rested upon Elisha (4 Kgdms. 2:15). He therefore gave him the gift he had brought with him—the koukoulion of Simeon—for it was more fitting for Daniel than for anyone else.

After this, Sergius saw in a dream three youths who came to him and said:

"Arise, Sergius, and tell Daniel that the time of his life in that church has now ended"; and they told Sergius to relate his vision to Daniel.

When he awoke, Sergius told Daniel of this. Daniel, understanding that God was commanding him to imitate the life of the Venerable Simeon, asked Sergius to go into the wilderness and find a suitable place where a pillar could be set up for him. Sergius went around a hill and, by God's direction, came to the place where the pillar was to be built. Stopping there to rest from the arduous journey, he saw this vision: a white dove flew over him, and Sergius tried to catch it. Suddenly he heard a voice from heaven:

"Do you think you can catch a dove with nets? It must be caught by hand."

But the dove flew upward and then vanished from sight. Understanding from this that God was showing him the place where the pillar should be erected, Sergius returned to Daniel and told him all that he had seen and heard. Daniel rejoiced and persuaded his friend, a certain Mark, to build him a pillar. With God's help, Mark quickly built it. When its roof, too, had been completed, the Venerable Daniel left the church by night, so that no one would know, and came to the pillar. There he prayed to God:

9. The cenobitic monastery of the "Sleepless Ones" was founded at the end of the 4th century by the Venerable Alexander. At first it stood in deep solitude on the river Euphrates, but later it was transferred to Constantinople. The order and monastic life of the inhabitants of this monastery were distinguished by especial strictness. The monastery received its name from the fact that its brotherhood, divided into 24 companies corresponding to the 24 hours of day and night, unceasingly praised the Lord in two choirs, chanting the Psalms of David in long drawn-out melody, so that the services in this monastery were performed without interruption and never ceased.

"Glory to Thee, O Christ God, that Thou deemest me worthy of such a life! Thou knowest, O Lord, that I am established by Thee, and, trusting in Thee, I ascend this pillar. Therefore receive my sacrifice, strengthen me for the struggle, and bring my undertaking to completion."

Having thus prayed, he ascended the pillar and began to live in silent solitude between heaven and earth, for God alone, withdrawing from all things earthly and drawing near in body and soul to the things above. But the devil, ever envious of the servants of God, began to trouble the saint here also, stirring up against him the owner of that place, a man named Gelasius. The latter learned that a pillar had been erected on his property without his consent, and that some monk had begun living upon it without his knowledge. In great anger, he informed the emperor and Patriarch Gennadius, successor to Anatolius. The emperor paid no attention to the matter, but the patriarch not only ordered that Daniel be brought down from the pillar; he even wished to punish him, giving Gelasius leave to remove him from the pillar in disgrace. In his fury, Gelasius was already on his way to carry out his wish, but God, restraining him from his evil intention, suddenly sent rain, a great storm, thunder, and lightning on a clear day. Gelasius, however, was neither frightened nor dissuaded from his wicked resolve; his heart burned with malice, for the devil himself was arousing his fury. Coming up to the pillar, Gelasius began to shout insults and reproaches at the saint, demanding that he descend at once and threatening to cast him down by force if he refused. Some of Gelasius's companions tried to stop him, saying:

"Leave him alone, for he does you no harm; and this pillar is not even on your land. You suffer no loss from it—instead, it is better for you to have such a neighbor, who will pray for you."

But Gelasius did not heed them and angrily ordered the saint to leave the pillar once and for all. When the saint began to descend and had reached the sixth step, everyone saw that his legs had become like logs and had grown numb from his continual standing day and night. Then all took pity on him, and even Gelasius himself relented and began to beg him to return to his place and forgive him, Gelasius, for

daring to insult him. After that, Gelasius had an even higher pillar built for the saint, and from then on showed him honor, praising the virtue of the Venerable man even before the emperor himself.

One day an old and respected man came to the saint from Thrace,[10] bringing with him his only son, who was possessed by a demon. Laying him at the foot of the pillar, the father tearfully entreated the saint to have compassion on him and take pity on him:

"Behold," he said, "it is already the thirtieth day that he, possessed by a demon, has continually mentioned your name, O servant of God."

The Venerable one, being merciful, answered him:

"If you believe that my Lord Jesus Christ will heal your son through me, may it be done to you according to your faith!"

After this he commanded that the demoniac be given holy oil to drink. When this had been done, the demon threw him down upon the ground and, shaking him violently, cried out: "I am coming out, I am coming out," and then indeed it went out. The father, seeing his son restored to health, gave him to a monastery, where he became a skilled monk. Then there came another man, by name Cyrus[11], a prudent and eloquent man. This man, having a daughter named Alexandra, who was tormented by a demon, also brought her to the saint. And as soon as the saint prayed to God and laid his hands upon the demoniac, the demon immediately came out of her, and she became healthy. From that time Cyrus began to show great love and zeal toward the Venerable Father. Once he brought to the saint the wife of one of his soldiers, also a demoniac, and she received healing through the prayers of the blessed one; for this, Cyrus, out of gratitude, wrote verses of the following content upon the pillar of the saint:

"Here stands firm a man assailed on every side, yet fearing neither winds nor storm; his food is the bloodless manna of heaven. The branch of Simeon supports two walls with a double pillar, glorifying the Son of the Mother who knew no marriage."

10. In antiquity Thrace embraced the present eastern part of Hungary, Transylvania, Bessarabia, Moldavia, Wallachia, Bulgaria, Serbia and the eastern part of Rumelia.

11. Cyrus was a famous Christian poet and hymnographer, city prefect of Constantinople under the emperor Theodosius the Younger (in the first half of the 5th century), and later Bishop of Smyrna.

The Greek emperor, Leo the Great,[12] who had no son but desired an heir, asked the Venerable Daniel to intercede with God that his wish might be granted. The Venerable one, being himself a child of prayer, for he had been born through his mother's prayers, had already obtained by his own prayers the mercy of God for others to have children. So on this occasion, too, after praying to God, he foretold to the emperor that a son would be born to him the following year. This prophecy was indeed fulfilled. Rejoicing at the birth of his son, the emperor, in gratitude for the saint's prayers, built him a third pillar.

When the fame of St. Daniel had spread everywhere, the Empress Eudocia, wife of Theodosius the Younger, who had formerly reigned,[13] came to him. She asked Daniel to descend from his pillar and go to her domain, where, she said, there were many uninhabited places. The blessed one praised her good intention and zeal, but was unwilling to leave the place where the Lord had commanded him to live. He blessed the Empress and dismissed her in peace, then ascended the highest pillar, which Gelasius had built.

At this time certain heretics who were in Byzantium, by means of large sums of money, persuaded a harlot named Vassiana to go to the Saint and seduce him to commit an evil deed, or to entice one of his disciples to do so. She, shameless and impure, went to the chaste and holy man, imagining that the blessed one would be enticed at the first sight of her and would conceive a desire to sin with her; for she was clothed in garments woven with gold and adorned with various finery. On arriving, she feigned illness and lived in a field opposite the pillar, near the enclosure of the rational sheep of the good Shepherd; she feigned illness with the aim of bringing spiritual harm, if not to the Saint himself, then at least to his disciples. Having remained there a considerable time, and seeing that she had no success, for she could in no way entice the one whose mind did not cleave to the earth but always abode with God on high, she departed with nothing. Then, coming to the heretics who had hired her, the wretched woman lied, saying that Daniel, enticed by her and greatly desiring her beauty, had ordered his disciples

12. St. Leo I was Byzantine emperor from 467 to 474.
13. From 408 to 450.

to bring her up to him on the pillar; "But I," she added, "did not consent to this; and they, fearing that this impious desire of theirs would become known to the people, resolved to kill me, and I barely escaped from their hands and fled."

Thus the wretched harlot lied against the Saint, and the heretics spread her words among the people, slandering the innocent and pure Daniel, with the aim of turning the people away from him. But the judgment of God overtook the lying and foul slanderer: an evil spirit suddenly attacked her and began to torment her; then, against her will, she confessed that she had been suborned by the heretics. Thus were the defamers of the servant of God put to shame. And the people, seizing her, brought her to the Saint and begged him to deliver her from the torment of the demons. Then Daniel, being a true disciple of Christ, who commanded us to love our enemies and bids us forgive those who sin against us up to seventy times seven (Mt. 18:21–22), did not repay her evil with evil, but did good to her, his evil-doer: he, having made a prayer on her behalf before God, ordered her to be given holy oil to drink, and she, receiving healing, began to kiss the pillar of the Saint, openly confessing her sin before all and asking forgiveness. From this time she began to lead a chaste life, having abandoned her sinful life.

The Venerable one not only had from God the power to cast out demons and heal infirmities, but was not without the gift of prophecy, that is, to foresee and foretell the future. Perceiving the wrath of God and the punishment about to befall the city, he sent word of this to Patriarch Gennadius and Emperor Leo, and advised that a moleben be served twice a week in order to avert the righteous wrath of God. But the blessed one's counsel was paid no attention, and therefore, for their sins, they indeed saw the fulfillment of his prophecy, as will be told below. At that time the emperor, moved by the Spirit of God, instructed the Patriarch to go to the great Daniel and ordain him to the priesthood. The Patriarch set out with his clergy, and, reaching the pillar, said to the Venerable one that he had long desired to see him, but since he was burdened with church affairs, he had been unable to do so.

"But now," he said, "I have come to see you and to be granted your prayers and conversation."

Then the Patriarch asked his permission to set up ladders and allow him to come up to him. But the Saint answered him:

"In vain has he who sent you to us laid upon you so great a labor."

When the Saint said this, the Patriarch was astonished and amazed that he could know that his, the Patriarch's, coming was not of his own will but under compulsion, for he would not have gone to him had he not been persuaded to do so by the emperor. For a long time the Patriarch, with those who were with him, begged the Saint to order ladders placed so that they might climb up to him, but he refused in every way. Meanwhile it was hot, the sun beat strongly, and the Patriarch, seeing many faint from heat and thirst, ordered the archdeacon, standing below, to begin the customary prayers at an ordination. Praying himself, and reading those prayers which are appointed at the ordination of a priest, he ordained the Saint Daniel to the priesthood, although he was high above them on the pillar.

And all the assembled people cried out: "Axios" [14]. After this the blessed Daniel, perceiving in this the will of God, ordered ladders placed against the pillar and received from the hands of the Patriarch the priestly vestments, communed with him of the Most Pure and Divine Mysteries, and, having prayed for all who had come to the pillar, dismissed everyone in peace. The emperor, learning that the Venerable Daniel had accepted ordination, rejoiced and hastened to the pillar. Taking off his imperial robe, he humbly climbed up to the Venerable one on the pillar and fell at his feet. Seeing that the Venerable one's feet had swollen and become festered from long standing, he marveled at his great endurance, and, receiving his blessing, returned home with joy. Meanwhile the time came for the prophecy of the Saint, which he had uttered concerning the wrath of God that was to befall that city, to be fulfilled. In the month of September, on the memory of the holy martyr Mamas, which was ordinarily celebrated with solemnity in Byzantium, at the time when the All-night Vigil was beginning in the church of his name from the evening, there suddenly broke out in the great capital city a most violent fire; this fire quickly reached such dimensions that

14. *Axios* ("worthy") is the exclamation by which the faithful signify their consent to the ordination of the one being ordained.

it encompassed almost the whole city, beginning at the seaside wall called the Ship Wall, continuing to the Market of Constantine and reaching even to the Shore of Julian [15], thus surrounding the entire middle of the city; the great wrath of God overtook the population: for the fire destroyed not only a multitude of large houses with their goods, beautiful palaces and holy churches, but people without number; some were turned to ashes by the fire, others were half-burned; others had their hands or feet, their eyes or head injured. And it was in no way possible to put out the fire; the more they strove to extinguish it, the more the flame spread: thus did God punish His people for their sins.

Thus Constantinople perished by fire nearly equal to that by which the city of Sodom once perished (Gen. 19:24–25). Then they remembered the prophecy of the Venerable Daniel, when he had foretold this punishment and called the people to prayer and repentance; and they came to him with tearful entreaty that he would appease God by his prayers and quench the fiery flame. The Saint reproached them with tears that they had not listened to him when he had foretold to them the present calamity, and had not carried out his counsel to serve public molebens twice a week. Then, lifting his hands to heaven, he prayed to God with tenderness for the city and its inhabitants, and after the prayer he announced that the fire would cease within seven days. So indeed it came to pass. And the emperor himself feared the wrath of God and, together with the empress, came to the Venerable one, asking God for mercy through the intercession of the Venerable one.

After the summer had passed, there came so cold an autumn that its severity is difficult to describe. Yet it not only could not overcome the valiant ascetic, but was itself overcome by him: for 4 days it seemed as though whole rivers were pouring down from the sky; some mountains were washed away by the multitude of torrents, villages were flooded; strong contrary winds blew the whole time, as though striving with one another; and the whirlwinds and storms were so mighty that by their force the iron hooks which held the Venerable one's two pillars were broken. But the Venerable one stood patiently on high while the

15. Localities that received their names from emperors: from St. Constantine the Great, equal-to-the-Apostles, and from Julian the Apostate.

pillar swayed, and he himself was tossed upon it by the wind like a branch on a tree; and the Saint's disciples below looked up at him with tears, fearing lest he should die from such cold or fall together with the pillar to the ground. But the hope of the Venerable Daniel in the Lord remained unshaken, and he continued to stand fearlessly on the pillar, firmly established upon it as upon a stone foundation. For why should one fear death to him for whom earthly life appeared as bonds and a prison, and death as release and freedom, and who repeated the words of David: "bring my soul out of prison" [Ps. 141:7 LXX], that is, out of the body? The more intense the cold the Venerable one endured, the more with fervent prayers he turned to the Lord. And indeed the righteous one cried out, and the Lord heard him [16], and as once from the boat (Mt. 8:26), so now from the high heaven He commanded the winds, and suddenly there came the greatest calm and clear weather.

When, after this, the emperor came to the saint to see whether the rains and winds that had just passed had done him any harm, and saw the iron hooks broken, he ordered the pillars to be reinforced as well as possible, and returned from the Venerable Father, having received his blessing. On the way, however, the following befell him: the horse on which he was riding, startled by something, reared up and, falling backward, threw the emperor off, so that his crown flew far from his head and broke, and the pearls and precious stones scattered from it. The imperial groom was a certain Jordan, an Arian in faith. Seeing the emperor's fall from the horse, he feared that all the responsibility would fall upon him and that he would be executed. Therefore, turning back, he came to the Venerable Father and, with tears, begged his intercession before the emperor, renouncing the Arian heresy and asking to be joined to Orthodoxy. The Venerable Father, out of regard for his piety, wrote to the emperor that since Jordan had renounced the Arian error and joined the Christian orthodox faith, he was worthy of pardon. To this the emperor replied to the saint:

"The cause of my fall was none other than myself, for I had the presumption to mount the horse while still in your sight, without first

16. The expression is from Ps. 33:18.

withdrawing on foot some distance from your holy pillar. Therefore I am not only not angry with Jordan, but I rejoice that my fall from the horse has become for him the cause of rising up from a fall of the soul."

In the time that followed, the emperor regarded the saint with such reverence that he not only honored him himself, but also presented him to others as a bearer of heavenly power. For example, when a ruler of a foreign kingdom, named Gubazes, had to come to Leo, the Greek emperor, to conclude a truce, the emperor brought him to the Venerable Daniel the Stylite and, pointing to him, said:

"Behold a wonder in my kingdom!"

Gubazes, astonished at the patience of the Venerable Father, began to bow not only to the saint himself but also to the pillar on which he stood, and with tears said:

"I thank Thee, King of Heaven, that Thou hast granted me, who came to an earthly king, to see a heavenly man and his dwelling."

Returning to his own country, Gubazes often spoke of the Venerable Father among his courtiers and sent letters to him, asking for his holy prayers for the protection of his kingdom. The Venerable Father was an object of great wonder to all, both near and far, to his own people and to strangers, to kings and commoners, to Greeks, Romans and foreigners, who came to him as to an angel of God, and departing called upon him for help, and all of them received what they asked through his holy prayers.

The courageous endurance of the Venerable Father, with which he, standing on the pillar, bore all the changes of the air, is sufficiently attested by the rains and storms mentioned above. But, lest we overlook anything worthy of the saint's memory, let us also recall the following:

Once there was an extraordinarily harsh winter, with the strongest winds, far more unbearable than those mentioned above; there was snow, ice and frost. The Venerable Father not only had no roof over his pillar, but even lost, to the wind, the leather hood that had been on his head, which the wind carried far off into the desert. Thus the voluntary martyr stood the whole night, enduring the severity of winter and the fierceness of the frost. By day a blizzard rose so strong that the saint's disciples could not even lift their eyes to the pillar, nor render the saint

any help. When the day passed, there followed an even harsher night, then again the same day and the same night, and only on the third day did the storm somewhat subside. Then, setting up ladders, the disciples climbed the pillar to the Venerable Father and found him entirely, from head to foot, covered with ice, barely breathing, and with difficulty warmed him, rubbing his body with warm water and a sponge. Coming to himself, the Venerable Father said to the disciples:

"Why do you trouble yourselves about me? Why have you awakened me from sweet sleep? I had just fallen asleep with a prayer on my lips. Yet I thank you, my children, that you have care for me, your father."

The Christ-loving emperor, learning of this, long besought the saint with tears, bowing to the ground, that he would permit at least some kind of roof to be fixed to the pillar.

"Spare yourself," he said to him, "if not for yourself, then at least for our sake, lest you die before your time and leave us orphaned."

Seeing the emperor's tearful entreaty, the Venerable Father allowed a roof to be built over his pillar, not for his own relief, but out of regard for the earnest request of the emperor, who had such love and reverence for the saint that he brought to the pillar of the Venerable Father all the ambassadors and great princes who came to him, sometimes personally, sometimes with his court nobles. Those who came marveled at the great courage of the Venerable Father, with which he bore both cold and heat by day and by night, and they usually departed from him with feelings of spiritual tenderness and with great spiritual profit for themselves.

After some time, Genseric, King of the Vandals, declared war against the Greeks and approached Alexandria with a numerous army. The Greek emperor, troubled by this invasion of foreigners, came with his senate to the Venerable Daniel the Stylite, desiring to receive help from his holy prayers. Foreseeing the future, the Venerable Father predicted to the emperor that Genseric would not only fail to take Alexandria, but would also fail in all his designs and return home without any success. Everything predicted by the Venerable Father indeed came to pass, and in gratitude for this the pious emperor wished to build cells beside the Venerable Father's pillar for the lodging of his disciples. The

Venerable Father, however, asked the emperor to build instead a church in the name of the Venerable Simeon the Stylite, and to transfer into it his holy relics from Antioch. The emperor immediately built a church in honor of the Venerable Simeon on the north side of Daniel's pillar, and beside the church a hospice; then, according to the wish of the Venerable Daniel, he transferred the honorable relics of St. Simeon into the newly built church with fitting honor. The Venerable Daniel was deeply gladdened by this, and on the occasion of the transfer of the relics he addressed the people with a suitable exhortation.

By his nature the Venerable Father was without malice and regarded his enemies with love. Once someone reviled the saint, and when the people listening to him became indignant, he, showing them a roasted fish, said:

"Behold what your ascetic eats!"

When, after this, he himself and his wife and children ate this fish, they at once fell into a severe illness, from which the Venerable Father healed them by his prayer, not remembering evil and not repaying insult for insult. In gratitude for so great a mercy from the malice-free father, they made an image of him in silver, on which they were depicted lying at the feet of the Venerable Father, and their names were inscribed; this icon they placed in the church of St. Michael the Archangel of the Heavenly Hosts.

With his freedom from malice, the Venerable Daniel also had the great gift of grace-filled speech, so that his hearers were brought by his teachings into deep tenderness, and very many received from them great spiritual profit, amending their lives. At the imperial court there was a distinguished warrior named Edran, a Galatian by origin, distinguished for health and military valor. Coming to the Blessed Daniel and hearing his soul-profiting exhortations, he was moved to heartfelt tenderness, at once renounced the world, and together with two of his friends joined the disciples of the Venerable Father. Learning of this, the emperor much regretted him as a brave soldier and sent to persuade him to return to the palace. But he disregarded the emperor's attention:

"What does it profit a man," he said, "to gain the whole world and lose or forfeit himself?" (Lk. 9:25).

After this, receiving the tonsure at the hand of the Venerable Father, he became an imitator of him in abstinence, eating only as much food as was needed to keep from dying of hunger; likewise he slept very little, and that standing or sitting slightly on a suspended rope. Afterward, for his virtuous life, he gained the emperor's love, and the emperor visited him whenever he came to the Venerable Daniel. Having lived in this manner for a fairly long time, he peacefully reposed. After that, an imitator of the life of this ascetic, who in monasticism was named Titus, was his servant Antony.

After some time, Emperor Leo gave his daughter Ariadne in marriage to Zeno the Isaurian[17], whom he sent with an army against the barbarians who had invaded Thrace. Before setting out, Zeno went to the Venerable Daniel the Stylite, and the saint foretold to him the whole outcome of the war: that he would return unharmed, and afterwards, following his father-in-law Emperor Leo, would receive the imperial scepter; but that, through the envy of his kinsmen, he would lose the imperial power, and then would receive it again. All of this came to pass in its time. When Zeno came to the throne after Leo's death and had reigned three years, Basiliscus[18], brother of Verina, the wife of the late Emperor Leo, rose up against him. Having driven Zeno out, he seized the Greek throne; and being a partisan of the heresy of Eutyches, he stirred up great turmoil in the Church of Christ, rejecting the Council of Chalcedon[19] and spreading the heretical teaching. Then Acacius, Patriarch of Constantinople[20], gathering the Orthodox bishops, opposed the emperor, though with fear, but had no success. Therefore he sent several bishops to the Venerable Daniel with tearful entreaty that he come down from his pillar and appear before them in the capital to help the Church Militant. The Venerable Daniel was very unwilling to leave his place, even for a short time; yet, seeing the need of the Church, and being also summoned by a Divine voice from above, he

17. Later Byzantine emperor, from 474 to 491.
18. He reigned from 474 to 477.
19. The Council of Chalcedon was the Fourth Ecumenical Council; it took place in 454. At it the heresy of Eutyches, otherwise called Monophysitism, was condemned; it acknowledged in Christ only one divine nature, which had supposedly swallowed up the human nature.
20. Acacius was Patriarch from 471 to 489.

came down from the pillar and appeared in the city before the patriarch and the bishops who were with him. He was received with honor by the bishops and was welcomed by them with inexpressible joy. Hearing of the arrival of the Venerable Daniel, and not wishing to meet him, the emperor withdrew from the city to his estate near the capital; but the Venerable Daniel followed him there as well. Since he was not able to reach it on his own, for his feet had swollen from long standing and were covered with numerous wounds, the faithful carried him in their arms. On the way there met them a leper. Seeing the Venerable Daniel, he began with weeping to beg him for healing; moved with compassion, the Venerable Daniel prayed for him and bade him wash in the sea that lay nearby. He washed and came out completely clean and healthy. The report of this miracle immediately spread everywhere, and a multitude of people with their sick began to gather to the Venerable Daniel, and by his prayers they received healing. Surrounded by such a multitude that had gathered to him for the sake of miracles, the Venerable Daniel drew near to the imperial palace, which was on the estate. A Goth, leaning down from above through a window, and seeing the saint carried in arms, laughed and said:

"Here is yet another anthypatos[21]!"

No sooner had he said this than he was at once subjected to the judgment of God: he suddenly fell from above to the ground and was dashed to death. The emperor, learning of the saint's arrival, gave orders not to admit him; and the saint withdrew, shaking the dust from his feet. But then the emperor immediately sent for the Venerable Daniel, fearing lest some misfortune should befall him, the emperor, for his disrespect toward the saint, and asked the Venerable Daniel to return to him. But he not only did not obey the emperor, but even foretold his ruin.

"He who provokes the King of Heaven," he said, "multiplies to himself abundant calamities and gathers wrath for the day of judgment."

Having said this, he set out on his way. No sooner had the messengers, returning, managed to convey the Venerable Daniel's words to the

21. *Anthypatos* was a provincial governor, sometimes the ruler of a city.

emperor, than suddenly one of the pillars in the palace fell; the emperor and all who were present were greatly frightened: so even an inanimate object, by the command of God, bore witness to the infallibility of the Venerable Daniel's prophecy, and by its fall signified the nearness of the emperor's overthrow from the throne. Returning to the city, the Venerable Daniel healed on the way two demoniac youths and the daughter of a widow; a serpent that had accidentally wound itself about his foot he removed with a single word, without suffering any harm from it. In the city itself, a respectable woman named Iraida, who was barren, approached Daniel; washing his feet with her tears, she begged the Venerable Daniel to loose her barrenness by his prayers. The saint foretold to her the birth of a son and even his name: "You, woman," he said to her, "will bear a son and will name him Zeno."

Meanwhile the emperor began to seek an occasion to be reconciled and to obtain forgiveness from the Venerable Daniel, for the fall of the pillar in the palace, at the time when the answer of Daniel was being reported to him, had greatly terrified him. At first he begged the Venerable Daniel for this through respectable persons, but insincerely, for his heart did not cease to incline toward lawlessness. Then he came to the Venerable Daniel in person, fell on his knees before him, and asked for forgiveness. But the Venerable Daniel, seeing with his spiritual eyes the emperor's evil intentions, reproved him for this, saying to those present:

"His humility and repentance are feigned; under a sheep's garment there is hidden in him the cruelty of a wolf; but you will soon see over him the righteous wrath of God, for the all-powerful right hand of the Most High casts down the proud from their thrones."

After all these events the Venerable Daniel returned to his pillar, and a little time later Basiliscus was indeed overthrown from the throne, as the Venerable Daniel had foretold. Zeno again received the imperial scepter, and seeing the fulfillment of the Venerable Daniel's prophecy, he came together with his wife to bow down before him.

The remaining time of his life the Venerable Daniel spent without interruption in standing on the pillar, performing many miracles. But, out of his humility and to avoid being glorified among men, he attrib-

uted the power of working miracles not to his own virtue but to the prayers of the Venerable Simeon; and so he sent all the sick who came to him to the church of Simeon, to his holy relics. A goldsmith brought to the Venerable Daniel his son, lame from birth, who was unable even to set foot on the ground, but crawled upon the earth on his belly like worms; sending him to the church of the Venerable Simeon, the blessed Daniel bade them lay the relics of St. Simeon upon the feet of the lame boy, and as soon as this was done, the lame boy leapt up, and himself walked to the pillar of Daniel, rejoicing and glorifying God.

Another man, returning from the east, fell into the hands of robbers. Having beaten him very severely, crushing his knees, and having robbed him, they went away, leaving him barely alive. Travelers passing by, seeing him faint from his wounds, took pity on him and carried him to the city of Ancyra[22]. The bishop of that city, bestowing all his care upon the sick man, summoned the most experienced physicians to him and healed him of his wounds. Nevertheless, even after he had recovered from his wounds, the man could not walk, because his legs had been badly injured, and although all the wounds on them had healed, there was not sufficient strength for walking. Deprived of the use of his legs, the sick man asked the bishop to carry him to the Venerable Daniel. He was laid, motionless as a log, in a cart and taken in this state to the pillar of that unmercenary physician. Daniel, sending the lame man to the church of the Venerable Simeon, bade him be anointed with oil taken from the holy relics, and by this he was at once healed: his shins and feet suddenly grew strong, he himself rose to his feet and began to walk, offering thanksgiving to God and to His holy servants, Simeon and Daniel.

A certain Spanish centurion had such deep faith in the Venerable Daniel that whenever any of his servants, relatives, or acquaintances fell ill, he wrote to the Venerable Daniel and asked him to heal the one who was sick. When, afterward, a reply from the Venerable Daniel was brought to him, he would lay it upon the sick person, and the sick person at once received healing.

22. Ancyra, now Angora, was an ancient city of Galatia (a small central region of Asia Minor); today it is the capital of one of the provinces of Asia Minor, with 30,000 inhabitants.

A beggar woman, having a 12-year-old son who was mute from birth, brought him to the pillar of the Venerable Daniel, and having set him beside the pillar, went away. The Venerable Daniel, seeing the boy from the pillar, bade his disciples take him, so that he might live among them. But the disciples, thinking that the boy had been taught by his mother to remain silent, supposing that he was feigning muteness because of poverty and in order to obtain sustenance more easily, caused him no little harm, frightening or beating him to make him say something; sometimes, while he slept, they pricked him with a pointed instrument, or struck him with thorny branches, so that, waking suddenly, he would utter some word. But when they had at last become convinced of his muteness, they reported it to the Venerable Daniel; he bade them anoint the mute's tongue with holy oil, and when on the Sunday, during the holy Liturgy, the deacon was preparing to read the Holy Gospel, and those present, as was the custom, were singing, "Glory to Thee, O Lord!", the boy also distinctly and loudly uttered: "Glory to Thee, O Lord!" And from that time he began to speak well.

Having reached deep old age, the Venerable Daniel drew near to his blessed repose; foreseeing it, he foretold it to his disciples, and wrote them the following testament:

My children and brethren! For you are truly my children, since I have begotten you spiritually, and my brethren, since our common Father is God, and it is to our common Father that I am departing. But I do not leave you, my beloved ones, weeping over your separation from me as orphans. I commit your care to your Father, who together with you also created me. Therefore He, who created all things with reason and wisdom, then bowed the heavens, came down to earth, suffered death, and rose again for our sake, will be with you as a wise guardian against the devil. As the Lord, He will keep you in obedience to His holy will; and as your Father, He will call you to Himself with mercy and with outstretched arms whenever you sin and fall. As the One who gave Himself to death for us, may He unite you in mutual concord and draw you to His Heavenly Father. Strive for humility, be obedient, love hospitality, fasting, vigil, and poverty; and above all keep the first and greatest commandment, the commandment of love, as well as

everything that belongs to pious people. Keep the true faith, shun heretical false teachings, and in nothing fall away from your mother, the Holy Church. If you fulfil all this, you will be perfect in virtue.

Having written such a spiritual testament to his spiritual children, the Venerable Father bade them read it aloud, and they wept, preparing themselves for parting from him.

Three days before the blessed death of the Venerable Father, at midnight, some of his most worthy disciples were granted to see all the holy saints—prophets, Apostles, and martyrs—appear to visit Daniel; greeting him, they bade him be found worthy of the Divine Mysteries. When the very day of the Venerable Father's death came, the Patriarch Euthymius,[23] successor to Acacius, arrived together with all his clergy. The aforementioned God-fearing woman Iraida, whose barrenness had been healed through Daniel's prayers, prepared everything necessary for the honorable burial of the saint. At that time there was a demoniac who, standing by the pillar, said that he saw Angels and many saints descending from heaven toward the Venerable Father, and he even named by name those saints whom he saw. The Venerable and God-bearing Father Daniel, rejoicing at his own death, committed his honorable and holy soul into the hands of God, being 80 years and three months old.[24]

Immediately upon Daniel's repose, the aforementioned demoniac was freed from the diabolical torment. When the Venerable Father died, three stars appeared in the sky opposite his pillar, in the shape of a cross, which shone even by day, in the light of the sun, with ineffable power; and they remained visible until the holy body of the Venerable man was buried there, beside his pillars. Together with him were laid the relics of the three holy youths of Babylon, Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, according to the Venerable Father's dying testament, so that those who came to venerate his tomb would honor not his relics but the relics of those holy youths. Thus he who was humble during his life re-

23. St. Euthymius was Patriarch of Constantinople from 490 to 496.

24. Venerable Daniel the Stylite reposed on December 11, in 489 or 490. He labored on his pillar for more than 30 years. His relics were seen in Constantinople in 1200 by the Russian pilgrim, the monk Antony.

mained humble even after death, avoiding human glorification; but God Himself glorified him who glorified Him, both on earth before men by miracles, and in heaven before His Angels, and He Himself is glorified by all creation forever. Amen.

Troparion, Tone 1:

Thou wast a pillar of patience, Venerable, zealous imitator of the forefathers: of Job in sufferings, of Joseph in temptations, and dwelling as a bodiless being while still in the flesh, O our Father Daniel. Entreat Christ God that our souls be saved.

Kontakion, Tone 8:

As a most radiant star, thou didst ascend, blessed one, upon the pillar, and by thy venerable deeds thou didst illumine the world, and thou didst drive away the darkness of delusion, O Father. Wherefore we entreat thee: now also illumine in the hearts of thy servants the unfading light of understanding.

* * *

Life of the Venerable Nikon the Dry, of the Kiev Caves

Житие преподобного Никона Сухого, Печерского

"Remember the prisoners, as though ye were bound with them" (Heb. 13:3)—so commanded the prisoner in the Lord, the holy Apostle Paul. Following this commandment, let us call to mind the miracles of the blessed prisoner Nikon, in whose destiny the power of the Lord, which frees His prisoners from their chains, was manifested beyond doubt.

The blessed Nikon was from the city of Kiev and was of noble parents; coming to the Caves Monastery, he first of all voluntarily surrendered his mind and his whole self into obedience to Christ, and became an experienced monk. Then, during the invasion of the wicked Polovtsy,[25] he was taken captive by them together with the holy Eustratius of the Caves, led from the monastery into their land, and held

in confinement there. A certain Christ-loving citizen of Kiev came there to ransom the captives, but the blessed Nikon refused this man; the Christ-lover thought that he acted so because he himself had rich relatives in Kiev, by whom he wished to be ransomed. Having ransomed many captives, that man returned to Kiev and told of the blessed Nikon. Learning of this, his relatives came to the Polovtsy to ransom Nikon with great treasures, but the blessed Nikon said to them:

"Do not spend your goods in vain for me; if the Lord desired my freedom, He would not have delivered me into the hands of these lawless men. He Himself gives over to captivity those whom He wills. And shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10).

The relatives reproached the blessed man, but were compelled, without having ransomed him, to return home with all the multitude of goods they had brought. After this, the Polovtsy who had taken the blessed man captive, and the others, seeing that they had not attained their aim, began to torment the servant of God mercilessly. For three whole years the blessed man was incessantly oppressed by them: bound, fettered hand and foot, tortured with fire, lacerated with knives, worn down with hunger and thirst, deprived of food for one, two, three, and more days; in summer they kept him for three days under the scorching rays of the sun, and in winter they threw him out onto the snow and frost. All this the impious Polovtsy inflicted upon him with the aim that he should ransom himself; but the blessed Nikon gave thanks to the Lord for everything and unceasingly prayed to Him. After some time he declared to his tormentors that Christ would free him from their hands without payment, and that he had already received word of this.

"There appeared to me," he said, "my brother Eustratius, whom you delivered to the Jews for crucifixion;[26] for this they will be condemned together with their fathers, who once cried out: 'His blood be on us and

25. This invasion of the Polovtsy against Kiev under the leadership of Khan Bonyak took place in 1096. – The Polovtsy were a nomadic people of Turkic stock, who came in great numbers into the southern Russian steppes from the Trans-Caspian steppes in the second half of the 11th century, and from that time until the 20s of the 13th century carried out constant devastating raids against Rus', especially the southern part.

on our children.'[27] But you, impious ones, will suffer together with Judas, who betrayed the Lord to the sufferings of the cross. The martyr who appeared to me also told me that on the third day, through the prayers of the holy Fathers Antony and Theodosius and the other saints of the Caves, I would be returned to the Caves monastery."

Hearing this, the Polovtsian who had taken the Venerable man captive thought that he meant to escape, and therefore cut the sinews beneath his knees so that he could not go, and moreover began to guard him more vigilantly. And so on the third day, at the sixth hour of the day, at the very time when the whole guard surrounded the Venerable man with weapons in hand, the blessed prisoner became invisible, and his guards heard only his voice, singing: "Praise the Lord from the heavens!"

Thus wondrously, and unseen by anyone, the saint was carried to the Caves Church of the Most Holy Theotokos at the very moment when, during the Divine Liturgy, the communion verse was being sung. And at once the whole brotherhood gathered around him and began to ask him how he had come there. At first he wished to conceal this marvelous miracle, but all those standing around him, seeing him bound with heavy chains, with incurable wounds and festering sores covering his whole body, and especially at the sight of blood flowing from his cut shins, urged him in every way to tell the truth. Therefore, against his wish, he at last told them everything as it had happened, but he would not allow the fetters to be removed from his hands and feet. Upon this the abbot said to him:

"Brother! If the Lord had desired these bonds of yours, He would not have freed you from captivity; therefore submit to our request."

After this, the fetters were removed from the Venerable man, and the brethren had them reforged into objects necessary for the sanctuary.

26. Venerable Eustratius was sold by the Polovtsy to a Jew of Kherson, who, together with his co-religionists, by means of terrible tortures tried to make him renounce Christ; not succeeding in this, they crucified him on a cross, and on it the holy martyr gave up his soul to God, pierced by the spear of the Jews.

27. The reference is to the Jews who demanded from Pilate the death of the Savior (see Mt. 27:26).

Some time later, when peace had already been concluded with the Polovtsy, that very Polovtsian who had held the blessed Nikon in captivity arrived in Kiev. Having come to Kiev, he entered the Caves monastery. Seeing here his former captive, the blessed Nikon, he recognized him and told the abbot and the brethren everything in detail; and he never returned to his own land, but, moved by all that had happened, received holy Baptism, and together with his other Polovtsian kinsmen who had also come to Kiev, became a monk, and with them ended his life in repentance in the same Caves monastery, serving his former captive, the blessed Nikon.

There were many other wondrous miracles of this blessed and holy Father Nikon, of which we mention the following.

Once, while the blessed man was still in captivity, the prisoners fell so ill from hunger and want that they nearly died; being with them, the blessed man forbade them to eat anything of the food of the impious, and by his prayer he restored all of them to health and granted them the ability to be freed from confinement unseen by anyone.

On another occasion, while the Blessed One was still in captivity, the Polovtsian who had taken him fell ill himself. Drawing near to death, he charged his wives and children to crucify over his grave Nikon, the captive he held. But this Blessed captive, seeing with his spiritual eyes that at the end of his life the Polovtsian would repent, prayed for him and healed him. Thus he delivered both himself from bodily death and that Polovtsian not only from bodily death but also from spiritual death.

This Blessed Nikon is called "the Dry" because while still alive he bled out, rotted from countless wounds, and dried up from his sufferings, so that he could say of his health, lost in captivity, the words of the Prophet David: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd" (Ps. 21:16), "my bones are burned as a firebrand" (Ps. 101:4). What can we say of this, marveling at his remarkable strength, not bodily but that which belongs to the bodiless heavenly powers, if not the words of the Apostle: "we have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4:7). Truly this prisoner, miraculously freed from his fetters, though bodily infirm, burned with the divine fire, shining with his good and God-

pleasing deeds. For this reason he was freed from bodily fetters,[28] and instead of the swiftly passing and quickly fading health of this life, he received from God the never-fading incorruption of his body, in which it remains even now in the cave; and in spirit he was counted worthy of "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" (1 Pet. 1:4), beside the fountain of eternal life, and received the unfading crown of glory. By this crown, through the prayers of the Venerable God-pleaser Nikon, may we too be made worthy to be crowned by Christ God, the King of Glory, to Whom be glory with His unbeginning Father and with the Most Holy, Good and Life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

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Commemoration of the Holy Martyrs Akepsius and Aiphal

Память святых мучеников Акепсия и Аифала

The Holy Martyrs Akepsius and Aiphal came from Persia, where they also suffered. Akepsius was at first a pagan priest in the city of Arbela,[29] but later, hearing of the faith of Christ, he resolved to approach a Christian bishop, hoping to receive healing from the illness that had then befallen him. The bishop instructed him in the faith and the Christian life, and healed him of his infirmity by his prayers. After this Akepsius returned to Arbela, appeared among his fellow citizens as a preacher and teacher of piety, having been ordained to the rank of presbyter. This was reported to the regional governor, who summoned this new herald of Christ and commanded that his ear be cut off and that he be cast into prison.

The Holy Aiphal was a deacon of the Arbelan church. Seized for confessing Christ, he was cruelly beaten, and the chief of the priests sent him to Akepsius in prison. Afterward both saints were again

28. The blessed repose of Venerable Nikon the Dry of the Kiev Caves followed at the beginning of the 12th century.

29. A city in Persia, present-day Erbil, in Asia Minor.

brought before the ruler of the land, and once more confessed their faith in Christ before him, and for this were sentenced to beheading.

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Commemoration of the Holy Martyr Miraxes

Память святого мученика Миракса

The Holy Martyr Miraxes was by birth an Egyptian; he was born in the city of Tenesia[30] to Christian parents, was baptized and reared in true piety. But, through his youthful frivolity, he yielded to the influence of the enemy of all good (the devil), and, presenting himself to Amir,[31] he renounced Christ. Taking off his belt[32] and trampling the holy cross, he took a military sword in his hand and cried out with a desperately loud voice:

"I am an Agarene. And henceforth I am no longer a Christian."

Through this apostasy Miraxes earned honor and esteem from Amir and his courtiers. Much time passed from the moment when the frivolous youth, carried away by vain glory, ceased even to think of his salvation. Meanwhile his parents, grieving over their son's fall, did not despair, and zealously besought God to return the apostate who had gone astray to the path of piety. And their prayer did not remain fruitless. The Lord looked upon the earnest petitions of the parents and heard their unceasing prayers: the grace of God illumined the heart of Miraxes, and he repented. He then came to his parents and said:

"Honored and beloved parents! A darkening of mind has overtaken me and I have committed so terrible a deed; but now I grieve bitterly over it and pray that I may become a Christian again and be with you."

To this his parents answered him:

"Child, since the time of your seduction into Agarenism[33] we have shed many tears for you and constantly prayed God that He would

30. Tenestia, or Tennes, north of Tanis, a seaside city on the route from Arabia to Alexandria.
31. The Saracen *Amir* was, as one may suppose, Amr, sent by Omar in 639 to conquer Egypt, who took Alexandria in 643. "Amir" or "emir" was also the general title of the rulers of Egypt.
32. Christians have always ascribed to the belt the symbolic meaning of a grace-filled power strengthening them in the struggle with spiritual enemies. (Eph. 4:14)
33. That is, Mohammedanism (i.e., the Agarenes, properly the descendants of Hagar through her son Ishmael – the Arabs; afterwards the name was applied to all Mohammedans in general).

grant you knowledge of the truth and return you to Christ. And now we thank His goodness and generosity that He has not rejected our weak prayers. But, as you yourself understand, our beloved son, we fear to receive you, fearing the wrath of Amir, lest some calamity befall us because of you. Therefore, if you wish to ease your conscience, burdened by your dreadful fall, to obtain mercy from God, to preserve our safety, and to be an intercessor for all your kin, then go to Amir and whatever you have confessed to us here in secret, proclaim there openly, as though without our knowledge. May the Lord arrange everything for you according to His good will! Go, our beloved child, and we, though unworthy of the mercy of our God, hope that He, the Good One, will hear our prayer."

Miraxes heeded the words of his parents, and, taking courage and trusting in the efficacy of their prayer, he resolved at once to do as his father and mother advised: taking up his belt, he went straightway to Amir and his Agarene counselors. Standing before Amir and his courtiers, Miraxes girded himself, and, signing himself with the honorable cross and kissing it, began to cry out loudly:

"Lord, my Christ, have mercy on me and save me!"

Such boldness struck everyone with terror. Amir seized Miraxes and asked:

"What has happened to you?"

To this he replied:

"I have come to myself after the diabolical darkening that befell me, and have returned to Christ my God; I have become a Christian again, as I was before. And so I have 'come to my senses'[34] to confess before you and your counselors and before all the Lord Christ, and to tell you all that I curse you and your faith."

Hearing this, Amir ordered Miraxes to be put in prison, and after keeping him there three days without food, subjected him to trial. At the trial Miraxes again confessed Christ, and for this was beaten and returned to prison. After three days he was again brought to the court and beaten even more. After six days the martyr was again brought to

34. The expression is from the Gospel parable of the repentant prodigal son. (Lk. 15:17)

the court, again fearlessly confessed Christ, and for this was flogged with whips of ox-sinew upon the wounds that had formed on his body from the earlier beatings. After that Amir sentenced him to death by beheading. The servants of Amir took the holy confessor and, placing him with themselves in a boat, sailed with him nine stadia from the shore. There he prayed to God, his head was struck off, and he was cast into the sea.[35] What afterward became of the martyr's body, whether it floated up from the sea, remained unknown; but his honorable head came out of the sea and was found by pious Christians, who took it as a precious gift for safekeeping. When this was reported to Amir, the venerators of the saint gave a ransom of one hundred gold coins, and, receiving permission to keep the found head of the martyr without hindrance, they made a silver reliquary and laid it in there with due honor. From that time to the present this holy sufferer's head has issued fragrant myrrh and grants all manner of healings, to the glory of the Lord and our Savior Jesus Christ, confirming in faith those in whom doubt or some scandalous perplexity about the holy martyr might have arisen.

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Commemoration of the Venerable Luke, the New Stylite

Память преподобного Луки, Нового Столпника

The Venerable Luke the Stylite lived in the time of the Greek emperor Romanus[36] and of Constantine Porphyrogenitus,[37] son-in-law of Emperor Romanus and son of Emperor Leo the Wise.[38] The patriarchal throne was then occupied by Theophylact,[39] son of Emperor Romanus. At that time the Bulgarians[40] attacked the Greek Empire, and Luke, by imperial command, was taken into the levy and took

35. About 640.
36. Romanus I Lecapenus reigned from 919 to 944.
37. Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus reigned from 912 to 959.
38. Leo VI the Wise reigned from 886 to 911.
39. Theophylact was Patriarch of Constantinople from 933 to 956.
40. The Bulgarian tsar Symeon, who died in 927, fought the Greeks and in 917 nearly destroyed the Greek empire.

part in the defense of the fatherland against its enemies. During the battle confusion arose in the Greek army, and many thousands of its men were destroyed; but Luke, by the providence of God, remained unharmed. After this he took monastic vows and, advancing in the monastic life, was counted worthy of ordination to the presbyterate. Zealous for higher spiritual perfection, he bound his body with iron chains, and, ascending a pillar, kept so strict an abstinence that for six days of the week he took no food whatever, and only on the seventh day ate the prosphora brought to him and a few vegetables: so he spent three years on the pillar. Then, called by a divine prompting, he went to Mount Olympus,[41] from there passed to Constantinople, and, so as not to break his vow of silence, placed a stone in his mouth, and finally withdrew to the city of Chalcedon.[42] There he too ascended a pillar and, glorified by many miracles, spent forty-five years upon it. Having thus piously completed the course of his earthly life, Saint Luke departed to the mansions of the Heavenly Father.[43]

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NOTES

8300. Antioch in Syria is one of the ancient and wealthiest cities of Syria and its capital. It lies on the river Orontes, about 10 versts from where it flows into the Mediterranean Sea, between the mountain ranges of Lebanon and Taurus. It was founded 300 years B.C. by Seleucus Nicator and named after Antiochus, his father. For the Christian Church, Antioch has special importance as the second great center of Christianity after Jerusalem, and as the mother of the Churches of Christians from among the pagans. The famous Church of Antioch was first planted by the holy Apostles Paul and Barnabas, and later confirmed also by the Apostle Peter. In Antioch there were many notable councils of the pastors of the Church during the heretical disputes (the Arian and Nestorian strife). The Church of Antioch from ancient times enjoyed special prerogatives, on a par with the Churches of Alexandria, Jerusalem, Constantinople and Rome; its hierarchs had, and to the present time have, the title and privileges of patriarch. At

41. In Bithynia, a northwestern region of Asia Minor.
42. Chalcedon was a city in Asia Minor, on the shore of the Constantinople strait, opposite Constantinople.
43. About 970.

present Antioch lies under Turkish rule and presents a small and poor town, in which there are counted up to 10,000 inhabitants.



THE TWELFTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 12

12 декабря

New Calendar December 12 · Old Calendar December 25 (civil dates)

Life of Our Holy Father Spyridon of Tremithous

Житие святого отца нашего Спиридона Тримифунтского

The wondrous Spyridon was a native of the island of Cyprus.[1] Born to humble parents and himself simple-hearted, meek and virtuous, he was from childhood a shepherd of sheep. Having come of age, he entered into lawful marriage and had children. He led a pure and God-pleasing life, imitating David in meekness, Jacob in simplicity of heart, and Abraham in love for strangers. After living a few years in marriage, his wife died, and he began to serve God with still greater freedom and zeal through good works, spending all his substance on receiving strangers and feeding the poor. By this, while living in the world, he so pleased God that he was granted the gift of working miracles: he healed incurable diseases and with a single word cast out demons. For this, Spyridon was ordained bishop of the city of Tremithous in the reign of the emperor Constantine the Great. And in the episcopal see he continued to work great and wondrous miracles.

Once on the island of Cyprus there was no rain and a terrible drought, which was followed by famine, and after the famine by pestilence, and multitudes of people perished from the famine. The heavens were shut, and there was need of a second Elias, or one like him, who would open the heavens by his prayer (3 Kgdms. 17). Such a one proved to be the holy Spyridon, who, seeing the calamity that had befallen the people and fatherly pitying those perishing from hunger, turned to God with fervent prayer, and at once the sky was covered with clouds on every side and abundant rain poured upon the earth,

1. Cyprus is a large island in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea, south of Asia Minor.

which did not cease for several days; the saint prayed again, and clear weather returned. The earth was richly watered with moisture and bore abundant fruit: the fields yielded a rich harvest, the gardens and vineyards were covered with fruit, and after the famine there was great abundance of everything, by the prayers of God's saint Spyridon. But some years later, because of the sins of men, by God's permission, famine again came upon that land, and the rich grain merchants rejoiced at the high prices, having grain gathered over several fruitful years, and, opening their granaries, began to sell it at high prices. There was then in Tremithous a grain merchant who suffered from insatiable greed for money and an unquenchable passion for pleasures. Having bought great quantities of grain in various places and brought it by ship to Tremithous, he would not, however, sell it at the price that then prevailed in the city, but stored it in warehouses, to wait until the famine grew stronger, and then, selling it dearer, to gain a greater profit. When the famine became almost universal and grew worse day by day, he began to sell his grain at the highest price. And behold, a poor man came to him and, bowing low, pleaded with tears that he show mercy and give a little bread, so that he, a pauper, might not die of hunger together with his wife and children. But the merciless and greedy rich man would not show mercy to the beggar and said:

"Go, bring money, and you will have everything you buy."

The poor man, faint from hunger, went to the holy Spyridon and, weeping, told him of his poverty and of the rich man's heartlessness.

"Do not weep," said the saint to him. "Go home, for the Holy Spirit tells me that tomorrow your house will be full of bread, and the rich man will beg you and give you the bread for nothing."

The poor man sighed and went home. No sooner had night come than, by God's command, a very heavy rain fell, which undermined the granaries of the merciless lover of silver, and the water carried away all his grain. The grain merchant, with his household, ran through the whole city and begged everyone to help him and not let him, a rich man, become a beggar; meanwhile the poor people, seeing the grain carried along the roads by the torrents, began to gather it. The poor man who the day before had asked the rich man for bread also gathered

for himself an abundance. Seeing over himself the manifest chastisement of God, the rich man began to beg the poor man to take from him for nothing as much bread as he wished.

Thus God punished the rich man for his merciless heart and, according to the saint's prophecy, delivered the poor man from poverty and hunger.

A farmer known to the saint came to this same rich man, during the same famine, with a request to lend him bread for food, promising to return what was given him with interest when the harvest came. The rich man, besides the granaries soaked by the rain, had other granaries full of grain; but, not sufficiently taught by his first loss and not cured of his avarice, he proved just as merciless to this poor man, so that he would not even listen to him.

"Without money," he said, "you will not receive from me a single grain."

Then the poor farmer wept and went to the hierarch of God Spyridon, to whom he told of his misfortune. The hierarch comforted him and sent him home, and in the morning came himself to him and brought a whole heap of gold (where he took the gold is told below). He gave this gold to the farmer and said:

"Take this gold, brother, to that grain merchant and give it to him as a pledge, and let the merchant give you as much grain on loan as you need now for food; and when the harvest comes and you have a surplus of grain, redeem this pledge and bring it back to me."

The poor farmer took the gold from the hierarch's hands and quickly went to the rich man. The covetous rich man rejoiced at the gold and at once let the poor man have as much grain as he needed. Then the famine passed, there was a good harvest, and after the reaping that farmer returned to the rich man the grain he had borrowed with interest, and, taking back his pledge, carried it with thanksgiving to the holy Spyridon. The saint took the gold and went toward his garden, taking the farmer with him.

"Let us go," he said, "with me, brother, and together let us return this to Him Who so generously lent us."

Entering the garden, he laid the gold by the fence, raised his eyes to heaven and cried out:

"O my Lord, Jesus Christ, Who by Thy will createst and transformest all things! Thou who once, before the eyes of the Egyptian king, didst turn Moses' staff into a serpent (Ex. 7:10), command this gold, which Thou earlier didst transform from an animal, to take again its original form; then this man too will know what care Thou hast for us, and will learn in deed what is said in Holy Scripture, that 'the Lord does whatever He pleases' (Ps. 134:6)!"

While he so prayed, a piece of gold suddenly stirred and turned into a serpent, which began to coil and crawl. Thus, first the serpent by the saint's prayer was turned into gold, and then, likewise miraculously, from gold it again became a serpent. At the sight of this miracle the farmer trembled with fear, fell to the ground and called himself unworthy of the wondrous benefit shown him. Then the serpent crept away into its hole, and the farmer, full of gratitude, returned home and marveled at the greatness of the miracle wrought by God through the saint's prayer.

A virtuous man, a friend of the saint, through the envy of wicked people, was slandered before the city judge, cast into prison, and then condemned to death without any fault. Learning of this, the blessed Spyridon went to deliver his friend from undeserved execution. At that time there was a flood in the land, and a stream on the saint's way had filled with water, overflowed its banks, and become impassable. The wonderworker recalled how Joshua with the ark of the covenant crossed the swollen Jordan on dry ground (Josh. 3:14–17), and, believing in the omnipotence of God, commanded the torrent, as a servant:

"Stand! Thus the Lord of the whole world commands you, that I may cross over and the man for whose sake I hasten may be saved."

No sooner had he said this than the torrent stopped in its course and opened a dry way, not only for the saint but for all who walked with him. The witnesses of the miracle hastened to the judge and informed him of the saint's approach and of what he had done on the way, and

the judge at once released the condemned man and returned him unharmed to the saint.

The venerable man also perceived men's secret sins. Thus, once, when he was resting from his journey at the house of a hospitable host, a woman who lived in an unlawful union wished, according to the local custom, to wash the saint's feet. But he, knowing her sin, told her not to touch him. And he said this not because he loathed the sinner and rejected her: for can a disciple of the Lord, who ate and drank with publicans and sinners, loathe sinners? (Mt. 9:11) No, he wished to make the woman remember her transgressions and be ashamed of her impure thoughts and deeds. And when the woman insistently continued to try to touch the saint's feet and wash them, then the saint, desiring to save her from perdition, rebuked her with love and meekness, reminded her of her sins and urged her to repent. The woman marveled and was amazed that even the deeds and thoughts that seemed most secret were not hidden from the far-seeing eyes of the man of God. Shame seized her, and with a contrite heart she fell at the saint's feet and washed them not with water but with tears, and openly confessed the sins for which she had been rebuked. She acted as once the harlot mentioned in the Gospel did, and the saint, imitating the Lord, mercifully said to her: "Thy sins are forgiven" (Lk. 7), and again: "Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more" (Jn. 5:14). And from that time the woman was wholly amended and became a useful example to many.

Thus far we have spoken only of the miracles which the holy Spyridon performed during his life; now we must speak also of his zeal for the Orthodox faith.

In the reign of Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor, in the year 325 A.D., the First Ecumenical Council assembled at Nicaea to depose the heretic Arius, who impiously called the Son of God a creature rather than the Creator of all, and to confess Him as consubstantial with God the Father. Arius in his blasphemy was supported by the bishops of the churches of considerable standing at that time: Eusebius of Nicomedia, Maris of Chalcedon, Theognis of Nicaea and others. The champions of Orthodoxy, however, were men adorned by life and teaching: the great St. Alexander, who at that time was still a presby-

ter and at the same time deputy for St. Metrophanes, Patriarch of Constantinople,[2] who lay on his sickbed and was therefore not present at the council, and the glorious Athanasius, who had not yet been adorned even with the presbyterial rank and was serving as a deacon in the Church of Alexandria. These two aroused a particular indignation and envy in the heretics precisely because they surpassed many in understanding the truths of the faith, though they had not yet been honored with the episcopal dignity. Together with them was also St. Spyridon, and the grace dwelling in him was more useful and more powerful in admonishing the heretics than the speeches, proofs and eloquence of others. With the consent of the emperor, Greek philosophers called Peripatetics[3] were also present at the council; the most learned of them took up the cause of Arius and prided himself on his especially skillful speech, seeking to ridicule the teaching of the Orthodox. The blessed Spyridon, an unlearned man who knew only Jesus Christ, "and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2), asked the fathers to allow him to enter into debate with this philosopher, but the holy fathers, knowing that he was a simple man entirely unacquainted with Greek wisdom, forbade him to do so. Nevertheless, St. Spyridon, knowing what power heavenly wisdom possesses and how weak human wisdom is before it, turned to the philosopher and said:

"Philosopher! In the name of Jesus Christ, listen to what I have to say to you."

When the philosopher agreed to listen to him, the saint began to speak.

"There is one God," he said, "who created heaven and earth, who formed man out of the earth, and who arranged all else, visible and invisible, by His Word and His Spirit; and we believe that this Word is the Son of God and God, who, having had mercy on us who had gone astray, was born of a Virgin, lived among men, suffered and died for

2. St. Mitrophan, 315–325. St. Alexander, his successor, was patriarch from 325–340.

3. The Peripatetics were the followers of Aristotle's philosophy. This philosophical school (direction) arose at the end of the fourth century B.C. and existed for about eight centuries; this philosophical direction later had followers among Christians too. It received its name Peripatetics from the fact that the founder of the school, Theophrastus, gave the school a garden with an altar and covered walkways (peripaton: colonnades, covered galleries).

our salvation, and rose again, and raised together with Himself the whole human race; we expect that He Himself will come to judge us all with a righteous judgment and render to each according to his deeds; we believe that He is of one essence with the Father, equal to Him in authority and honor... This is how we confess, and we do not seek to investigate these mysteries with a curious mind, and you too should not dare to investigate how all this can be, for these mysteries are above your understanding and far exceed all human knowledge."

Then, after being silent for a little while, the saint asked:

"Does this not also seem so to you, philosopher?"

But the philosopher remained silent, as though he had never before had occasion to dispute. He could say nothing against the words of the saint, in which some Divine power was manifest, in fulfillment of what is said in Holy Scripture: "For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power" (1 Cor. 4:20).

At last he said:

"And I think that everything is truly as you say."

Then the elder said:

"Then go and take the side of the holy faith."

The philosopher, turning to his friends and disciples, declared:

"Listen! While the dispute with me was conducted by means of proofs, I set one proof against another and, by my skill in argument, repulsed whatever was put before me. But when, instead of proofs from reason, some special power began to issue from the mouth of this elder, proofs are powerless against it, for man cannot resist God. If any of you can think as I do, let him believe in Christ and together with me follow this elder, through whose mouth God Himself spoke."

And the philosopher, having accepted the Orthodox Christian faith, rejoiced that he had been defeated in the dispute by the saint, to his own benefit. All the Orthodox rejoiced as well, while the heretics suffered great shame.

At the conclusion of the council, after the condemnation and excommunication of Arius, all who had been present at the council, and likewise St. Spyridon, went home. At this time his daughter Irene died; she spent the time of her flourishing youth in pure virginity in such a way

that she was deemed worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven. Meanwhile, a certain woman came to the saint and related with tears that she had given some gold ornaments to his daughter Irene for safekeeping, and since the latter had soon died, what had been entrusted had disappeared without a trace. Spyridon searched throughout the house to see whether the ornaments had been hidden somewhere, but did not find them. Moved by the woman's tears, St. Spyridon, together with his household, approached the coffin of his daughter and, addressing her as if she were alive, cried out:

"My daughter Irene! Where are the ornaments entrusted to you for safekeeping?"

Irene, as if awakened from a deep sleep, answered:

"My lord! I hid them in this place in the house."

And she indicated the place.

Then the saint said to her:

"Now sleep, my daughter, until the Lord of all awakens you at the time of the general resurrection."

Fear fell upon all present at the sight of so wondrous a miracle. And the saint found in the place indicated by the deceased what had been hidden and gave it to that woman.

After the death of Constantine the Great, his empire was divided into two parts. The eastern half fell to his eldest son Constantius. While residing in Antioch, Constantius fell into a grievous illness which the physicians could not cure. Then the emperor abandoned the physicians and turned to the All-powerful healer of souls and bodies, God, with fervent prayer for his recovery. And behold, in a vision at night the emperor saw an Angel who showed him a whole assembly of bishops, and among them especially two who apparently were the leaders and chiefs of the rest; the Angel told the emperor at the same time that only these two could heal his illness. Awakening and reflecting on what he had seen, he could not guess who the two bishops he had seen were: their names and origin remained unknown to him, and one of them, moreover, was not yet even a bishop at that time.

For a long time the emperor was at a loss, and at last, on someone's good advice, he gathered bishops to himself from all the surrounding

cities and sought among them the two he had seen in the vision, but did not find them. Then he summoned the bishops a second time, now in greater numbers and from more distant regions, but among them too he did not find those he had seen. At last he ordered the bishops of his entire empire to assemble before him. The imperial command, or rather request, reached even the island of Cyprus and the city of Tremithous, where St. Spyridon was bishop, to whom God had already revealed everything concerning the emperor. Immediately St. Spyridon set out for the emperor, taking with him his disciple Triphyllius, together with whom he had appeared to the emperor in the vision and who, as has been said, was not yet a bishop at that time. Arriving at Antioch, they went to the emperor's palace. Spyridon was dressed in poor garments and held in his hands a staff of palm wood; on his head was a woven palm-leaf mitre, and on his breast hung a small clay vessel, as was the custom among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who ordinarily carried in such a vessel oil from the holy Cross. When the saint entered the palace in such a guise, one of the palace servants, richly dressed, took him for a beggar, mocked him and, not allowing him to enter, struck him on the cheek; but the Venerable one, in his gentleness and mindful of the Lord's words (Mt. 5:39), offered him the other cheek. The servant understood that before him stood a bishop, and, recognizing his sin, humbly asked his forgiveness, which he received.

No sooner had the saint entered the emperor's presence than the latter at once recognized him, for it was in just such a form that he had appeared to the emperor in the vision. Constantius rose, approached the saint and bowed to him, tearfully begging his prayers to God and imploring the healing of his illness. As soon as the saint touched the emperor's head, the latter immediately recovered and rejoiced exceedingly at his healing, received through the saint's prayers. The emperor showed him great honors and spent the whole day with him in gladness, displaying great respect for his good physician.

Meanwhile Triphyllius was greatly struck by all the imperial splendor, the beauty of the palace, the multitude of nobles standing before the emperor seated on his throne, all of which had a wondrous ap-

pearance and glittered with gold, and by the skillful service of the servants clothed in bright garments. Spyridon said to him:

"Why are you so amazed, brother? Do royal majesty and glory make the emperor more righteous than others? Does not the emperor die just like the last beggar and is he not given to burial? Will he not stand before the Terrible Judge on equal terms with others? Why do you prefer what is perishable to the unchanging, and marvel at what is insignificant, when one should first of all seek what is incorporeal and eternal, and love the incorruptible heavenly glory?"

The Venerable one also taught the emperor himself at length, that he should remember the benefaction of God and himself be good to his subjects, merciful to sinners, gracious to those who petition him for anything, generous to those who ask, and a father to all, loving and kind; for whoever reigns otherwise should be called not a king but rather a tormentor. In conclusion the saint enjoined the emperor to hold strictly to and keep the rules of piety, by no means accepting anything contrary to the Church of God.[4]

The emperor wished to give thanks to the saint for his healing through his prayers, and offered him a great quantity of gold, but he refused to accept it, saying:

"It is not right, O Emperor, to repay love with hatred, for what I have done for you is love. Indeed, to leave one's home, to cross so great a distance by sea, to endure cruel cold and winds: is this not love? And for all this am I to take gold as payment, gold which is the cause of every evil and so easily destroys all righteousness?"

Thus the saint spoke, wishing to take nothing; and only by the most insistent entreaties of the emperor was he persuaded to accept gold from him, but not to keep it for himself, for at once he distributed all that he had received to those who asked.

Furthermore, at the saint's exhortation, the Emperor Constantius released from taxes the priests, deacons and all the clergy and servants of the Church, judging it unseemly that the servants of the Immortal King should pay tribute to a mortal king. Having parted from the em-

4. It should be noted that Emperor Constantius favored the Arian heretics.

peror and returning home, the saint was received into the house of a certain lover of Christ on the way. There a pagan woman, who did not know how to speak Greek, came to him. She brought in her arms her dead son and, weeping bitterly, laid him at the feet of the saint. No one understood her language, but her very tears clearly showed that she was entreating the saint to raise her dead child. But the saint, avoiding vain glory, at first refused to perform this miracle; yet, out of his compassion, he was overcome by the bitter weeping of the mother, and he asked his deacon Artemidotus:

"What shall we do, brother?"

"Why do you ask me, Father?" replied the deacon. "What else can you do but call upon Christ, the Giver of Life, who has so many times fulfilled your prayers? If you have healed the emperor, will you then reject the poor and the destitute?"

Still more moved to compassion by this good counsel, the hierarch wept, and kneeling, he addressed the Lord with a warm prayer. And the Lord, who through Elijah and Elisha restored life to the sons of the widow of Sarepta and of the Shunammite woman (3 Kgdms. 17:21; 4 Kgdms. 4:35), heard the prayer of Spyridon and returned the breath of life to the pagan infant, who, coming to life, at once began to cry. The mother, seeing her child alive, fell dead from joy: not only grievous illness and sorrow of heart cause a man to die, but sometimes excessive joy produces the same effect. Thus that woman died of joy, and the death of her struck the onlookers, who after an unexpected joy at the raising of the infant, were plunged into unexpected sorrow and tears. Then the saint again asked the deacon:

"What shall we do?"

The deacon repeated his former counsel, and the saint again had recourse to prayer. Lifting his eyes to heaven and raising his mind to God, he prayed to Him who breathes the spirit of life into the dead and who changes all things by His single will. Then he said to the dead woman, who lay on the ground:

"Rise up and stand on your feet!"

And she stood up, as one who awakes from sleep, and took her living son in her arms.

The saint forbade the woman and all who were present to tell of the miracle to anyone; but the deacon Artemidotus, after the saint's death, not wishing to keep silent about the greatness and power of God manifested through the great saint of God Spyridon, told the faithful everything that had occurred.

When the saint returned home, a man came to him wishing to buy a hundred goats from his flock. The saint told him to leave the agreed price and then take what he had bought. But he left the price of ninety-nine goats and concealed the price of one, thinking that this would not be known to the saint, who, in his heartfelt simplicity, was entirely free of all worldly cares. When the two of them were in the pen for the cattle, the saint bade the buyer take as many goats as he had paid for, and the buyer, separating out a hundred goats, drove them outside the fence. But one of them, as if a wise and good servant, knowing that she had not been sold by her master, soon returned and ran back into the pen. The buyer took her again and dragged her away with him, but she broke free and again ran back into the pen. Thus three times she tore herself from his hands and ran back to the fence, and he forcibly led her away; and at last he threw her over his shoulders and carried her to his home, while she bleated loudly, butted him in the head with her horns, struggled and tore herself free, so that all who saw it were astonished. Then Saint Spyridon, perceiving what was happening and not wishing at the same time to expose the dishonest buyer before everyone, said quietly to him:

"Look, my son, surely this animal is not doing this without cause, not wishing to be taken to you: have you not concealed the due price for her? Is it not for this reason that she tears herself from your hands and runs to the fence?"

The buyer was ashamed, confessed his sin and asked forgiveness; then he gave the money and took the goat, and she herself went meekly and quietly into the house of the one who had bought her, ahead of her new master.

On the island of Cyprus there was a village called Phriera. Having come there on some business, Saint Spyridon entered the church and bade one of the deacons who were there to say a short prayer; the saint

was weary from the long journey, the more so since it was then the time of harvest and the heat was intense. But the deacon began slowly to carry out the command and deliberately drew out the prayer, as if with a certain pride he uttered the exclamations and sang, and openly boasted of his voice. The saint looked at him angrily, although he was gentle by nature, and rebuking him, said: "Be silent!" And at once the deacon became dumb: he lost not only his voice but the very gift of speech, and stood as one without a tongue. Fear fell upon all who were present. The news of what had happened quickly spread through the whole village, and all the inhabitants ran together to see the miracle and were struck with terror. The deacon fell at the feet of the saint, begging by signs to be given back his tongue, and at the same time the deacon's friends and relatives entreated the bishop for the same. But the saint did not yield to their request at once, for he was stern with the proud and vainglorious; at last he forgave the offender, restored his tongue and gave back the gift of speech; yet at the same time he left upon him a mark of the punishment, not returning to his tongue full clarity, and for the rest of his life left him weak-voiced, indistinct of speech and stammering, so that he would not take pride in his voice nor boast of the clarity of his speech.

Once, Saint Spyridon entered the church in his city for Vespers. It happened that there was no one in the church except the clergy. But, notwithstanding this, he bade many candles and lamps be lit, and himself stood before the sanctuary in spiritual tenderness. And when at the appointed time he exclaimed, "Peace be to all!", and there was no people to give the customary response to the wish of peace proclaimed by the hierarch, suddenly there was heard from above a great multitude of voices crying, "And with thy spirit." This choir was great and harmonious and sweeter than any human singing. The deacon who was saying the litanies was filled with terror, hearing after each litany some wondrous singing from above: "Lord, have mercy!" This singing was heard even by those who were far from the church, and many of them hastened toward it; and as they drew near the church, the wondrous singing more and more filled their hearing and delighted their hearts. But when they entered the church, they saw no one except the hierarch

with a few of the church servants, and they no longer heard the heavenly singing, at which they were greatly amazed.

At another time, when the saint was likewise standing in the church at Vespers, the oil in the lamp ran short and the fire was already going out. The saint grieved over this, fearing that when the lamp went out the church singing would be interrupted, and thus the customary order of the Church would not be carried out. But God, who fulfils the desire of those who fear Him, commanded the lamp to overflow with oil, as once the vessel of the widow in the days of the prophet Elisha (4 Kgdms. 4:2–6). The church servants brought vessels, placed them under the lamp and filled them wondrously with oil. This material oil clearly served as a sign of the abundant grace of God, with which Saint Spyridon was filled and by which his rational flock was nourished.

On the island of Cyprus there is a city of Kirina. Once Saint Spyridon came here from Tremithus on his affairs together with his disciple Triphyllius, who was then already bishop of Lefkosia, on the island of Cyprus. When they were passing over the mountain Pentadaktylos and were at the place called Parymna (remarkable for its beauty and rich vegetation), Triphyllius was enticed by this place and desired to acquire for his church some estate in that region for himself. For a long time he pondered this within himself; but his thoughts were not hidden from the far-seeing spiritual eyes of the great father, who said to him:

"Why, Triphyllius, do you constantly think of vain things and desire estates and gardens, which in truth have no worth and only seem to be something substantial, and by their illusory value stir up in men's hearts the desire to possess them? Our treasure is inalienable: it is in heaven (1 Pet. 1:4); we have *a house not made with hands* (2 Cor. 5:4). Strive toward these, and enjoy them in advance (through contemplation of God): they cannot pass from one state to another, and whoever once becomes their possessor receives an inheritance of which he will never again be deprived."

These words brought Triphyllius great benefit, and afterwards, through his truly Christian life, he came to be a chosen vessel of Christ, like the Apostle Paul, and was granted countless gifts from God.

Thus St. Spyridon, himself virtuous, led others to virtue; those who followed his exhortations and instructions profited by them, while those who rejected them met with an evil end, as the following shows.

A merchant, a resident of the same Tremithus, sailed to a foreign country to trade and remained there for twelve months. During this time his wife fell into adultery and conceived. On returning home, the merchant saw his wife pregnant and understood that she had committed adultery in his absence. He flew into a rage, beat her, and, unwilling to live with her, drove her from his house. Then he went and told everything to the holy hierarch of God, Spyridon, and asked his counsel. The hierarch, grieving in his soul over the woman's sin and over the great sorrow of her husband, summoned the wife, and without asking whether she had truly sinned, since her pregnancy and the fruit conceived through lawlessness already bore witness to her sin, said to her plainly:

"Why have you defiled your husband's bed and dishonored his house?"

But the woman, having lost all shame, dared openly to lie, claiming that she had conceived not by anyone else but by her husband. Those present were even more indignant at this lie than at the adultery itself, and said to her:

"How can you say that you conceived by your husband when he was not at home for twelve months? Can a conceived fruit remain in the womb for twelve months or even longer?"

But she held to her position and maintained that what she had conceived was waiting for its father's return in order to be born in his presence. Defending this and similar lies and disputing with everyone, she raised a clamor and cried out that she had been slandered and wronged. Then St. Spyridon, wishing to bring her to repentance, said to her gently:

"Woman! You have fallen into a great sin; great too must be your repentance, for there still remains for you hope of salvation: no sin exceeds the mercy of God. But I see that despair has been produced in you by adultery, and shamelessness by despair, and it would be just for you to bear a fitting and swift punishment; nevertheless, leaving you a

place and time for repentance, we declare to you before all: the fruit will not come forth from your womb until you speak the truth, not covering with a lie what even a blind man, as they say, can see."

The saint's words were soon fulfilled. When the time came for the woman to give birth, a cruel affliction seized her, causing her great torment and holding the fruit in her womb. But she, grown hardened, would not confess her sin, and in it she died, without giving birth, a painful death. Learning of this, the holy hierarch of God wept, grieving that he had judged the sinner with such a judgment, and said:

"I will no longer pronounce judgment upon people, if what I say comes to pass so quickly in their case."

A woman named Sophronia, of good morals and piety, had a husband who was a pagan. She many times approached the holy hierarch of God Spyridon and earnestly entreated him to try to convert her husband to the true faith. Her husband was a neighbor of St. Spyridon and respected him, and at times, as neighbors, they even visited each other's houses. Once many neighbors of the saint and of the pagan gathered, and they themselves were there too. And suddenly the saint said to one of the servants, loudly for all to hear:

"Outside the gate stands a messenger sent by the worker who tends my flock, with word that all the cattle, when the worker fell asleep, were lost, having strayed into the mountains. Go and tell him that the worker who sent him has already found all the cattle safe in one cave."

The servant went and passed the saint's words to the messenger. Soon afterwards, before the guests had risen from the table, another messenger came from the shepherd with the news that the whole flock had been found. Hearing this, the pagan was inexpressibly astonished that St. Spyridon knew what was happening out of sight as if it were taking place nearby; he imagined that the saint was one of the gods, and wished to do to him what the inhabitants of Lycaonia once did to the Apostles Barnabas and Paul[5], that is, bring sacrificial animals, prepare garlands, and offer sacrifice. But the saint said to him:

"I am not a god, but only a servant of God and a man in all things like yourself. As for my knowing what happens out of sight, this my

God gives me; and if you too believe in Him, you will come to know the greatness of His almighty power and might."

For her part, the pagan's wife Sophronia, seizing the opportunity, began to persuade her husband to renounce pagan error, to know the One True God and to believe in Him. At last, by the power of Christ's grace, the pagan was converted to the true faith and enlightened by holy baptism. Thus the "unbelieving husband"[6] was saved (1 Cor. 7:14), as the holy Apostle Paul says.

They also tell of the humility of the blessed Spyridon: how, though he was a hierarch and a great wonderworker, he did not disdain to tend unreasoning sheep, going after them himself. Once thieves broke into the fold by night, stole several sheep, and wished to leave. But God, loving His servant and guarding his meager possessions, bound the thieves fast with invisible bonds, so that they could not leave the enclosure, and there they remained against their will until morning. At dawn the saint came to the sheep and, seeing the thieves bound hand and foot by the power of God, by his prayer loosed them and gave them instruction not to covet what was another's but to live by the labor of their hands; then he gave them one ram, so that, as he himself said, "their toil and sleepless night should not be wasted," and sent them away in peace.

A merchant of Tremithus had the custom of borrowing money from the saint for his trading operations, and when, on returning from his journeys on business, he brought back what he had taken, the saint would usually tell him to put the money himself into the chest from which he had taken it. So little did he concern himself with temporal gain that he never even inquired whether the debtor repaid correctly! Meanwhile the merchant had many times already acted in this way, taking money from the ark himself with the saint's blessing and putting

5. The inhabitants of the Lycaonian city of Lystra (in Asia Minor) took the Apostles Paul and Barnabas for the pagan gods Zeus and Hermes. (Acts 14:13.)

6. Paul in these words means precisely that the impurity of the pagan father is as it were effaced by the purity of the Christian mother and is not transmitted to the children born of such a marriage. But it is self-evident that marriage with a Christian (man or woman) is for a pagan (man or woman) a natural step toward full sanctification, that is, toward his or her own acceptance of the faith of Christ.

back what he had brought; and his affairs prospered. But once, carried away by greed, he did not put the gold he had brought into the chest but kept it for himself, and told the saint that he had put it in. Soon he became poor, for the gold he had concealed not only brought him no profit but also ruined his trade and, like fire, consumed all his property. Then the merchant came again to the saint and asked for a loan. The saint sent him to his bedroom, to the chest, so that he might take the money himself. He said to the merchant:

"Go and take it, if you yourself put it in."

The merchant went, and not finding any money in the chest, returned to the saint empty-handed. The saint said to him:

"But, my brother, until now no other hand has been in the chest except yours. So if you had then put the gold in, you could now take it out again."

The merchant, ashamed, fell at the saint's feet and asked forgiveness. The saint at once forgave him, but at the same time said, for his instruction, that he should not covet what was another's and should not defile his conscience with deceit and lying. Thus profit gained by unrighteousness is not profit, but in the end loss.

Once a council of bishops was convened in Alexandria: the Patriarch of Alexandria summoned all the bishops subject to him and wished by common prayer to overthrow and destroy all the pagan idols, of which there were still very many there. And so, at the time when numerous zealous prayers, both conciliar and private, were offered to God, all the idols both in the city and in the surrounding area fell, and only one idol, particularly venerated by the pagans, remained intact in its place. After the patriarch had long and fervently prayed for the destruction of this idol, one night, as he stood in prayer, a certain divine vision appeared to him, and he was bidden not to grieve that the idol was not being destroyed, and to send quickly to Cyprus and summon from there Spyridon, bishop of Tremithus, for the idol had been left standing precisely so that it might be destroyed through the prayer of this saint. The patriarch at once wrote a letter to St. Spyridon, in which he called him to Alexandria and told of his vision, and immediately dispatched this letter to Cyprus. On receiving the letter, St. Spyridon boarded a

ship and sailed for Alexandria. When the ship stopped at a harbor called Neapolis, and the saint went ashore, at that very moment the idol in Alexandria, with its numerous altars, was destroyed; for this reason in Alexandria they also learned of the arrival of St. Spyridon. For when the patriarch was informed that the idol had fallen, he said to the other bishops:

"Friends! Spyridon of Tremithus is approaching."

And all, making ready, went out to meet the saint and, receiving him with honor, rejoiced at the arrival among them of so great a wonderworker and a light of the world.

The church historians Nicephorus[7] and Sozomen[8] write that St. Spyridon was exceedingly concerned for the strict observance of ecclesiastical order and for the preservation, in complete inviolability down to the last word, of the books of Holy Scripture. Once the following occurred. On the island of Cyprus there was a gathering of the bishops of the whole island concerning ecclesiastical affairs. Among the bishops were St. Spyridon and the above-mentioned Triphyllius, a man skilled in book-learning, for in his youth he had spent many years at Berytus[9], studying Scripture and the sciences.

The assembled fathers asked him to deliver an address to the people in the church. While he was teaching, he had occasion to recall the words of Christ spoken to the paralytic: "Arise, and take up thy bed" (Mk. 2:12). Triphyllius replaced the word "bed" with the word "couch," and said: "Arise, and take up thy couch." Hearing this, St. Spyridon rose from his place and, unable to endure the alteration of Christ's words, said to Triphyllius:

"Do you think yourself better than He who said 'bed,' that you are ashamed of the word He used?"

Having said this, he left the church in the sight of all. And he did not act thus out of malice, nor because he himself was wholly un-

7. Nicephorus Callistus, church historian, lived in the fourteenth century. His "Ecclesiastical History," in eighteen books, extends to the death of the Byzantine Emperor Phocas (611).
8. Sozomen, church historian of the fifth century, wrote a history of the Church from 323 to 439.

learned: by slightly putting to shame Triphyllius, who prided himself on his eloquence, he taught him humility and meekness. Moreover, St. Spyridon enjoyed (among the bishops) great honor, as the eldest in years, glorious in life, first in episcopal rank, and a great wonderworker, and therefore, out of respect for his person, everyone could respect his words as well.

Upon the Venerable Spyridon rested such great grace and mercy of God that, during the harvest, in the hottest part of the day, his holy head was once found covered with a cool dew descending from on high. This was in the last year of his life. Together with the reapers he went out to the harvest (for he was humble and worked himself, not proud of the height of his rank), and as he was reaping his field, suddenly, in the very heat, his head was moistened, as once happened with the fleece of Gideon (Judg. 6:38), and all who were with him in the field saw this and marveled. Afterward the hair on his head suddenly changed: some of it became yellow, others black, others white, and only God Himself knew why this was and what it foreshadowed. The saint touched his head with his hand and told those present that the time of the separation of his soul from his body was drawing near, and he began to teach everyone good deeds, and especially love for God and neighbor.

After a few days, St. Spyridon, during prayer, committed his holy and righteous soul to the Lord[10], Whom he had served in righteousness and holiness all his life, and he was honorably buried in the church of the Holy Apostles at Tremithus[8350]. There it was established that his memory should be celebrated annually, and at his tomb numerous miracles are performed to the glory of the wondrous God, glorified in His saints, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, to Whom also from us be glory, thanksgiving, honor, and worship forever. Amen.

Troparion, Tone 1:

Thou didst appear as a champion of the First Council, and a wonderworker, O God-bearing Spyridon, our father. Wherefore,

having raised the dead in the tomb, thou didst transform the serpent into gold; and when thou didst sing thy holy prayers, thou hadst Angels ministering with thee, O most holy one. Glory to Him Who gave thee strength; glory to Him Who crowned thee; glory to Him Who through thee worketh healings for all.

Kontakion, Tone 2:

Wounded by the love of Christ, most holy one, thou didst fix thy mind upon the dawn of the Spirit, and by thy active vision thou didst find a God-pleasing work, becoming a divine altar, asking for the divine radiance for all.

* * *

Commemoration of the Holy Hieromartyr Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem

Память святого священномученика Александра, епископа Иерусалимского

The Holy Hieromartyr Alexander, who valiantly labored and suffered for the faith of Christ, belonged to the numerous disciples whom the most renowned teacher of the Church of the third century, Clement of Alexandria[11], gathered about him in Alexandria, and he was in close friendship with Origen[12]. At the beginning of the

9. Berytus, today Beirut, an ancient city of Phoenicia on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea; it especially flourished in the fifth century and was famous for its higher school of rhetoric, poetry and law; today it is the chief administrative city of Asiatic Turkish Syria and the most important point on the Syrian coast, with a population of up to 80,000.

10. St. Spyridon died about 348.

11. Clement of Alexandria, one of the most distinguished and renowned Christian scholars of the first centuries, in 217 became catechist (teacher) of the famous Alexandrian "Catechetical" school, which, by its position at the center of universal learning and erudition, took on the character of a theological-scholarly educational institution, drawing a multitude of educated listeners within its walls.

12. Origen, a disciple of Clement of Alexandria, was the most famous Christian teacher of the third century; at first he was among the most distinguished teachers of the Alexandrian catechetical school. St. Alexander, later, when he was already governing the Church of Jerusalem, out of regard and friendship for Origen, permitted him to deliver a discourse in his presence in the church of Jerusalem; for this permission, given to a layman to preach in church in the presence of a bishop, he was condemned by Demetrius, Bishop of Alexandria, Origen's enemy; but St. Alexander pointed out to him the example of other churches. Afterwards he even ordained Origen to the presbyterate, through which the dispute between him and Demetrius was again kindled.

third century St. Alexander was made bishop in Flavias, in Cappadocia[13]. In the persecution of Septimius Severus[14], for his zeal for the faith of Christ, he endured imprisonment in a dungeon, where he languished for several years. After his release from prison, the saint desired to venerate the holy places in Jerusalem[15], where he was met by the people and by hermits who had been informed from above of his coming, and, by a clear heavenly revelation, he was chosen as co-ruler with the aged Patriarch of Jerusalem, Narcissus[16]. For the span of a whole generation, thirty-eight years, St. Alexander wisely governed the Church of Jerusalem[17]. He was known for his love of learning.

At the Jerusalem Church he established, at his own expense, a considerable library of the books of Holy Scripture and of the works of the Christian writers existing at that time[18]. In the persecution of Decius, St. Alexander was summoned to Caesarea of Palestine[19] for judgment, and there he confessed Christ a second time. Cast into prison, he remained there for a fairly long time, and there he gave up his spirit to the Lord[20].

* * *

Commemoration of the Holy Martyr Razumnik

Память святого мученика Разумника

The Holy Martyr Razumnik[21] was a Roman by birth, and in his youth his parents gave him to the Bishop of Rome to be taught

13. Cappadocia is a vast region in the eastern part of Asia Minor. Flavia was one of the cities of Cappadocia.
14. About 209–210. Septimius Severus was Roman emperor, reigning from 193 to 211.
15. This was in the year 212.
16. Narcissus was Patriarch about 196 and then a second time in 212.
17. From 212 to 250.
18. Among others, the famous church historian Eusebius, who lived in the fourth century, made use of this library in his time, and he preserved in his history the information about the life of St. Alexander of Jerusalem.
19. Caesarea Palaestinae lies on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean and was one of the richest and most splendid cities of Palestine. It received its name in honor of Caesar Augustus (Octavian) from Herod, King of Judea, who built cities and temples everywhere in honor of Caesar and adorned Caesarea. Today, on the site of the former magnificent city, there stretches a complete desert with nothing but heaps of ruins.
20. St. Alexander of Jerusalem reposed in the year 251.

the Divine books. And since in learning the books he showed a good disposition, he was appointed to the office of church reader. Fulfilling this office, he taught many to piety and the true faith, and he exposed and censured those who worshipped idols in pagan reverence. When this was reported to the emperor, the holy Razumnik was brought before him for interrogation, and before the emperor too he boldly confessed Christ. For this he was subjected to cruel tortures, and since he remained unshaken and did not renounce Christ, after long torments he was condemned to beheading. Thus the Holy Razumnik died[22].

* * *

NOTES

8350. The honorable relics of St. Spyridon, by the grace of God, have been preserved incorrupt, and, what is especially remarkable, the skin of his flesh has the softness customary in human bodies. At Tremithus his relics rested until the middle of the seventh century, when, because of the raids of barbarians, they were transferred to Constantinople. At the end of the twelfth or the very beginning of the thirteenth century, according to the testimony of Archbishop Antony of Novgorod, who traveled to the holy places, the honorable head of the hierarch was in the church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, and his hand and relics rested beneath the sanctuary of the church of the Most Holy Theotokos Hodegetria. The Russian pilgrims of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—Stephen of Novgorod (1350), Deacon Ignatius (1389), the clerk Alexander (1391–1395), and Hierodeacon Zosimas (1420)—saw the holy relics of Spyridon and kissed them in the Constantinopolitan church of the Holy Apostles. On May 29, 1453, a priest named George, surnamed Kalochairetes, set out with the relics of the hierarch for Serbia, and from there in 1460 to the island of Corfu. In the first half of the eighteenth century the Russian pilgrim Barsky saw them on this island, in the city of the same name, in the church of St. Spyridon; the relics were complete, except for the right hand, which is in Rome in the church dedicated to the Mother of God called "New," near the Piazza Pasquino.

21. Among the Romans he is called Synesius; among the Greeks, Synetos, "the intelligent."

22. Razumnik was a reader under Pope Sixtus (257–258); he suffered under the emperor Aurelian (270–275). His relics were transferred in 830 from Rome to the island and abbey of Reichenau.

THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 13

13 декабря

New Calendar December 13 · Old Calendar December 26 (civil dates)

Suffering of the Holy Martyrs Eustratius, Eugene, Auxentius, Mardarius and Orestes

Страдание святых мучеников Евстратия, Евгения, Авксентия, Мардария и Ореста

In the reign of the emperors Diocletian and Maximian, paganism held sway throughout the whole Roman Empire, and there was, as it were, a universal mutual rivalry in the service of idols; this was especially so when imperial edicts were sent to all the cities and villages, addressed to the governors of the provinces and to the judges, commanding that abundant gifts and sacrifices be offered to the gods on fixed days and feasts. By these edicts a royal recompense, honors and the highest places in the state were promised to those who zealously served the gods; but to those who refused to bow down to the idols there threatened, first, the confiscation of their property, and then, after every kind of torment, the death penalty. The persecution of the Christians spread everywhere, and in every place the governors of the provinces, and the authorities in general, strove to wipe the Christian faith utterly from the face of the earth.

Meanwhile the emperors were informed that all Great Armenia and Cappadocia[1] were resisting their commands, and, believing unanimously in the crucified Christ and placing their firm hope in Him, were supposedly intending to fall away from the Roman Empire.

Incensed by this news, the emperor Diocletian summoned all his nobles and for three days, from morning until evening, took counsel with them on how to utterly uproot Christianity. Then he first of all removed from office the governors of Armenia and Cappadocia, as inex-

perienced and unskillful rulers of the provinces entrusted to them, who had not been able to bring the people to obedience. In their place he chose two Greeks, Lysias and Agricolaus, men stern and cruel, and appointed them over both provinces, assigning to Lysias the supervision and guarding of the borders, and to Agricolaus the general administration of the whole province. All the troops in both provinces were also placed under their command.

When the two new rulers arrived at their appointed place, there began a merciless extermination of people of every age, without any investigation, on the mere empty slander of envious enemies against some Christian: each day the Christians were sought out, seized and delivered for execution to the bloodthirsty rulers, as to carnivorous beasts. Lysias, who had his residence in the city of Satalion[2], as soon as he found Christians anywhere, whether men or women, after many tortures and sufferings sent them, bound and under strong guard, to Agricolaus, so that they might not die in their homeland and be buried, according to the Christian custom, by relatives and acquaintances; and thus, slain in a foreign land, they would vanish without a trace. Agricolaus did exactly the same, sending to Lysias at Satalion the Christians seized in Sebastia[3], for the two governors were on the closest terms of friendship and in complete agreement with one another, and both, acting in the manner described, had in view one aim: to inflict still greater torment on the Christians by killing them outside their fatherland.

At this time there lived in Satalion a certain Eustratius. He was known to all his fellow citizens as the first in the city by noble birth and by rank, for he held the office of military commander; and at the same

1. Here is meant the so-called Lesser Armenia, a Roman province between the upper reaches of the rivers Euphrates and Halys, so called in distinction from Greater Armenia, a vast mountainous country west of the Asia Minor peninsula between the river Kura and the upper reaches of the Tigris and Euphrates, which was ruled from the 2nd to the 5th century B.C. by kings of its own tribe. Cappadocia is a very extensive region in the middle of the eastern part of Asia Minor, west of the upper Euphrates; it was once one of the significant states of Asia, but it lost its independence and in the end became part of the Roman Empire as its province (in 17 or 18 A.D.). Cappadocia bordered on Lesser Armenia, and the latter for a long time was previously counted as part of the former.

2. Satalion, also Satala, is a city in Armenia.

3. Sebastia is a city in Armenia, northeast of Asia Minor.

time he was distinguished by piety, the fear of God and a blameless life. Seeing the unceasing great persecution of the Christians, he grieved in soul and was sorrowful. Sighing bitterly and weeping, spending his time in fasting and prayer, he cried out to our Lord Jesus Christ that the Lord would show mercy to His servants and, having compassion on His people, would save them from calamities and turn away the ruin that threatened them. At the same time Eustratius himself desired to accomplish the exploit of the holy martyrs and to be made worthy to share in their sufferings; but at the thought of the manifold torments and the cruelty of the tormentors he felt fear. In the end, however, he resolved upon the following. He gave his belt to a faithful servant and ordered him to carry it to the church of Araurakia, from which he himself was a native, and where at that time the presbyter was Auxentius, who had already given witness to his fidelity to the true God. Eustratius told his servant to lay the belt secretly in the sanctuary, while he himself hid in the church and watched who first of those coming would take the belt: if the presbyter Auxentius, coming to pray, should take it, the servant, saying nothing to him, was to return home; but if anyone else should wish to take it earlier, the servant was in no case to permit this and was to bring the belt back. Having sent the servant with this command, Eustratius decided in his soul thus: "If the presbyter himself takes the belt, this will be a sign that God Himself is pleased for Eustratius to give himself up to torment for Christ; but if anyone else should wish to take it, this will mean that he should not give himself up to torment, but should quietly keep the holy faith."

Before long the servant returned and told his master that, as soon as he had laid the belt in the sanctuary, the presbyter Auxentius came at once, as though someone had sent him on purpose, and, entering the sanctuary, took the belt. Hearing this, Eustratius was greatly gladdened; his face shone with joy, at which one of his friends, named Eugene, was much amazed.

Soon after this the blessed Auxentius was seized together with others, questioned at the trial, tortured and cast into prison, where he was kept in chains. Then in the middle of the city, on a raised platform, a place for judgment was again set up, and Lysias, sitting haughtily on

the judge's seat, ordered the prisoners to be brought in for questioning. The holy Eustratius, coming into the prison, asked all those confined in chains for Christ to pray for him, for he himself, as he said, intended that very day to share their struggle with them. Then all the holy prisoners, bending their knees, prayed to God for him. When they had finished the prayer, the soldiers, under the command of Eustratius, led them out of the prison to the trial. When the company of soldiers halted, according to custom, before the judge, Lysias ordered to be brought before him for trial one by one those who had already been through the first questioning. When the trial began, Eustratius said:

"By the imperial edict issued earlier and read again now at this trial, all Christians, wherever they may be and whatever position they hold in the state, are subject to judgment; by this edict Auxentius has been brought here, a man long since known for his birth and his pious life, and now still more renowned for the courage and steadfastness with which he declared himself a servant of Christ, the Heavenly King. Standing in this court, he has already contended the contest of immortality and has exposed, O judge, your impiety, bearing witness by word and deed and bravely enduring torment. From that day, as a malefactor, he was shut up in prison, and today you have ordered him brought to questioning together with his holy company; and behold, all of them stand here together with me, unshaken in spirit and ready to shame and overthrow all the treacherous designs which your father, the devil, teaches you against them!"

Hearing this, Lysias was thrown into confusion by the unexpected boldness of Eustratius. Looking at him menacingly and choking with rage, he cried out in a fearsome voice:

"Never before has it happened to me to conduct a stricter trial than today, when this vile impious fellow dares to hold forth before me! Let his belt and military garb be taken from him, and let it be known to all that he is stripped of the rank he has held until now; then let him, naked and bound hand and foot with cords, and cast to the ground, continue his speech!"

The servants quickly carried out Lysias's command, and then he said to Eustratius:

"Will you not repent of your destructive purpose? Then you will gain my favor and altogether escape punishment. In any case, before the tortures, declare to me your name and homeland and reveal to us your faith."

The saint answered:

"I was born in the city of Aravrak, and my name is Eustratius; in my native tongue, Kirisik. I am a servant of the Lord of all, God the Father and His Son our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and to worship the one God in the Trinity and to believe in Him I learned from my swaddling clothes."

Lysias said:

"Let the soldiers say how many years he has been in military service?"

The soldiers answered:

"It is now the twenty-seventh year since he began his service, when he was still quite a youth."

Then Lysias said to the saint:

"Eustratius! You yourself see what harm your disobedience has brought you: abandon now your madness, come to your senses, and do not ruin your honor and rank, won by the labors of so many years of military service; acknowledge the mercy and power of the gods and win to yourself the gentleness of the emperor and the humanity of the court!"

"To hateful demons and deaf idols, the works of human hands," the saint answered, "no one of sound understanding has ever found it necessary to bow down, for our Scriptures say: 'The gods that have not made heaven and earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens' (Jer. 10:11)."

The judge said:

"Is it not, then, he who worships the Crucified God, like you who have fallen into complete error, who has sound understanding?!"

"If your spiritual faculties," the holy Eustratius answered him, "were not perverted by service to vanity, and if your soul were not wholly immersed in thoughts of earthly things, I would prove to you that this Crucified One is the true Savior and Lord and Creator of all

creation, who existed before the ages in the Father and, by His ineffable wisdom, has through regeneration quickened our deadness."

At these words the judge interrupted the saint's speech and said:

Let this insolent fellow be hanged by ropes, and let a fire of tow be kindled beneath him, while from above he is struck on the shoulders with three clubs at once: let us see how eloquent he will be then!

When this had been carried out, the saint was tormented for a long time, scorched from below and cruelly beaten from above. Yet even amid such sufferings he uttered no cry of pain, did not change countenance, and seemed to suffer not he himself but someone else, so that the tormentor himself was amazed. At length Lysias commanded that the torture be stopped, and said to the saint with a malicious smile:

"What do you think, Eustratius? Would you not like me to ease somewhat the pain of the wounds inflicted upon you?"

And he at once ordered salt water mixed with vinegar to be brought and poured abundantly over the burned places, and at the same time the body of the martyr to be vigorously rubbed with sharp potsherds. But the sufferer bore this torment too with courage, as though he felt no pain at all. The tormentor even thought that St. Eustratius was making himself insensible to pain by some sorcery. Then St. Eustratius said to him:

"In subjecting me to such torments, you, against your own will, have done me a kindness, for by these torments you have dispelled the darkness surrounding me that arose from the carnal coarsening of my soul, and have made me the conqueror of temptations of the self-willed mind that had long beset me. You have given me the opportunity to overcome all the impulses of the passions that had seized me and all the disturbances of the soul. You have preserved for me, untouched by any temptation, the inner firmness of spirit, the pledge of immortal life, in which is laid up for all believers the incorruptible treasure, and you have pointed out to me a brief path, free from suffering, by which I may attain, in this frail body, the life of the Angels, and in eternity the heavenly blessedness. Now I know that I am the Church of the Living God, and that the Holy Spirit dwells in me (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16). Therefore: 'Depart from me, all ye that work iniquity, for the Lord has heard the voice of

my weeping; the Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer' (Ps. 6:9–10). Indeed, 'my soul shall rejoice in the Lord; it shall delight in His salvation. All my bones shall say: Lord, who is like Thee, who delivers the weak from the strong, and the poor and needy from him that spoils him?' (Ps. 34:9–10).

Hasten then, servant of the devil, and take care to leave unused not one of the instruments of torment at your disposal. Test me as gold in the furnace, or even more severely; but you will not find in me that impiety which you so honor, and which you serve in deed. The service of false gods, which has taken hold of you and your insane emperor, is worthy of abomination."

The tormentor replied:

"It seems to me that from the strong pain your reason has been impaired, and that is why you speak so many absurdities. If your God, as you say, could make you immortal, He would have delivered you from these wounds as well. Therefore cease to deceive yourself with hopes that cannot be fulfilled, and hasten to avail yourself of the means of deliverance I offer you."

"Would you like," answered Eustratius, "you, a man blinded in all your senses, to be convinced that nothing is impossible for my God? Listen and look at me, whom you think to put to death and destroy by the tortures you have devised!"

And so, while all looked on with great attention, suddenly the scabs fell from his body like scales, and he became perfectly whole, without even a trace of the wounds upon his body. And all, at the sight of such a miracle, glorified the One True God. And Eugenius, friend, fellow-citizen, and comrade of Eustratius in service, cried out in a loud voice:

"Lysias! I too am a Christian, and I curse your faith, and I refuse to obey, as does my master Eustratius, the imperial edict and you!"

Enraged, Lysias at once commanded that Eugenius be seized and set in the midst of the court, and said to him:

"The examination of all of them requires much time and labor, and meanwhile I must now attend to other public affairs. Therefore I command that this sorcerer and magician Eustratius, and likewise Eugenius, who today has shown himself his like-minded companion, be

fettered tightly in chains and cast into prison together with the other Christians, and be held there under guard until the next examination."

Having said this, Lysias rose from his place and closed the court. The saints, rejoicing at the courage and patience of Eustratius and at the saving miracle of our Lord Jesus Christ manifested in him, were led into the dungeon. When they arrived there, they all with one voice sang the psalm beginning with the words:

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together!" (Ps. 132:1). Having offered prayer, they sat down, and St. Eustratius instructed them and prepared them for the coming struggle.

So the day ended. During the night Lysias commanded the soldiers accompanying him to make ready for the journey, for he intended to go to the city of Nicopolis[4]. While the soldiers were preparing to set out, Lysias himself went to the dungeon, had Eustratius brought out before him, and, smiling hypocritically, said to him:

"Greetings, dear Eustratius!"

The saint answered:

"May the Almighty God, whom I serve, worthily reward you for your greeting, judge!"

"Concern yourself with pleasing God," said Lysias, "and now take these boots, put them on, and go with us on the road with cheerfulness." These boots were of iron, studded with long and sharp nails. They were firmly tied to the saint's feet with straps, and Lysias sealed the knot with his ring, and commanded that Eustratius, bound together with the other prisoners, be led behind him, and that he be beaten and urged on all along the way, so that he would walk faster. Lysias himself went ahead with his soldiers. In two days they came to the city of Aravrak, the native place of Eustratius and Eugenius. When they drew near to Aravrak, all the inhabitants came out to meet them, wishing to see the blessed Eustratius; but none of his friends and acquaintances dared approach him for fear of being seized, since it was known that Lysias had already issued the corresponding order. Among others, along the road to Aravrak there lived a certain Mardarius, a man of

4. Nicopolis is a name frequently met with in ancient history for cities. Here is meant a city in Lesser Armenia on the border of Pontus, on the Lycus, a tributary of the Iris, now Endérès.

humble origin and not wealthy, but thoroughly content with his lot. When Eustratius and the other Christians were being led past, he was occupied with building the roof of his new house. Looking down at the saintly prisoners as they passed by, he saw among them, like a bright star, St. Eustratius, and at once came down from the roof and said to his wife in Armenian:

"Do you see, wife, one of the leaders of this land, known for his birth and wealth and honored for his military service? Do you see how he has disregarded everything and goes to be a sacrifice pleasing to God? Blessed is he who was glorious in this life too, and who will receive from our Master Christ a great reward and will be counted worthy of ineffable blessedness together with the Angels." The pious woman answered her husband:

"My beloved husband! What hinders you too from going the same way that he goes, and from being together with him granted a holy end, so that you may be an intercessor for me in heaven, and for our little children, and for all your kin?" Mardarius said to her:

"Give me my shoes, and I will go on the desired path." She gladly fulfilled his request. Mardarius, shod, dressed, and girded, embraced his two infant sons, and turning his face to the east, began to pray.

"O Lord God, Father Almighty, Lord Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit," he said, "One Godhead and One Power! Have mercy upon me, a sinner, show compassion, and be the keeper of this Thy servant and of these two infants, Thou who art the Defender of widows and the Guardian of orphans! And I, O Master, with great joy and heartfelt desire go to Thee[5]."

Then he kissed the children and said:

"Be well, wife, and do not grieve or weep, but rejoice and be glad, for I commit you, our children, and my soul to our Almighty and All-good God."

5. This prayer of St. Martyr Mardarius is read at the conclusion of the Third Hour and at the Midnight Office, in the following form: "O Master, God, Father Almighty, Lord, Only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit, one Godhead, one Power, have mercy on me, a sinner, and by whatever judgments Thou knowest, save me, Thy unworthy servant; for Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen."

With these words he hastily went out of the house, and his wife saw him off with joy. Mardarius went to a distinguished citizen of Aravrak named Mukaror, a man rich and noble, greeted him, and said:

"Behold, I go to your friend and kinsman Cyrisicus, and if it is God's will I shall be his companion and together with him shall bear the martyr's struggle. Be, after God, an intercessor for my wife and my children in this life, and I, if I find favor with God, will help you on the day when we all stand before Him, and you will receive your reward."

"Go in peace, my son," answered the pious Mukaror, "finish your good course and be concerned about nothing: I will be a father to your wife and to your infants."

Then Mardarius took leave of Mukaror, went on, and overtook the saints already near the city itself. He called out loudly to Eustratius:

"Lord Cyrisicus! As a sheep comes to its shepherd, so I have come to you, desiring to accompany you all. Receive me, then, and number me among your holy company, and lead me, though I am unworthy, to the martyr's struggle, that I may become a confessor of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Then he cried out still louder:

"Hear, servants of the devil, hear! I too am a Christian, as is my master Eustratius."

At once the soldiers seized him and, binding him, cast him into prison together with the other Christians, and of this they informed Lysias, who immediately opened the court. The soldiers, according to custom, began to bring the Christians out of the prison. Among others was brought Auxentius, naked and bound at the hands with cords, while the other Christians stood nearby and looked on.

The judge said to the saint:

"Auxentius! Spare us our labour and spare yourself your torments. Tell us: have you not abandoned your vain and ruinous disobedience to your own harm, and have you not returned to our merciful gods?"

"Hear me a little, Lysias," answered St. Auxentius. "I swear by that Truth which is above all things and sees all things, that my mind will unchangingly know the One God, and to Him alone will I offer worship. Even if you inflict on me countless wounds and doom me to torments

greater than the former ones; even if you put me to death by the sword or by fire, in no way will you be able to change my thoughts. So do, then, whatever you wished to do."

Then the tormentor pronounced the sentence of death:

"Auxentius, who, after many tortures, has until now remained in his madness, shall be deprived of life by the execution he has deserved, by beheading with the sword. The carrying out of this sentence shall take place in a remote forest, so that his despicable body may not be buried in a fitting manner. And he who lately dared to join the prisoners, let him be brought out here into the midst; he shall at once receive the honour for which he strives."

While the soldiers were freeing Mardarius from the ropes, he said to St. Eustratius:

"My lord Kyrisik! I beg you, pray to God for me, and teach me what to answer the destroyer, lest this cruel tormentor somehow beguile me, a simple and unlettered man."

St. Eustratius said to him:

"Repeat, my brother Mardarius, unchangingly only this: 'I am a Christian,' 'I am a slave of Christ,' and answer nothing more, whatever he may say to you or do to you."

When the soldiers brought Mardarius before Lysias, they said:

"Here is a prisoner, recently taken."

Lysias said:

"Let him tell us his name, his fatherland, his occupation, his place of residence, and say what faith he is of."

"I am a Christian," answered Mardarius, and to all the questions of his tormentors about his name and fatherland he went on crying out:

"I am a Christian! I am a slave of Christ!"

They could obtain nothing more from him. Lysias, seeing his steadfastness, ordered iron stakes to be driven through his feet, and, having passed ropes through them, to hang him head downward; then to pierce and scorch his whole body with red-hot iron nails. Mardarius hung and was tormented for a long time, and at last he cried out:

"Lord! I thank Thee that Thou hast granted me to share these blessings! This alone did I desire, that I might be saved by Thee, and to this I strove: receive, then, my soul in peace."

Having said this, he died.

When the body of Mardarius had been removed from the place of torment, Lysias said:

"Let Eugenius of Satala be brought in, who dared to enter here during the questioning of Eustratius. I do not affirm that he is a Christian, as they themselves chatter, but I find him to be a very harmful man."

When Eugenius was brought before the court, the attendants said:

"Here is Eugenius."

The judge said:

"Tell me, vile man, what evil demon taught you and urged you to such audacity, that you dared without any shame to reproach us, counting for nothing the severity of this present court?"

St. Eugenius answered:

"My God, who overthrows the demons you revere, is He who gave me strength and granted me boldness and freedom of speech, so that I might mock you, wretched one, stinking dog, vessel of Satan, who will be delivered to perdition together with yourself."

The tormentor cried out:

"Cut out his blasphemous tongue, chop off both his hands, and break his shins, so that he may behave more meekly toward us!"

During this torture, St. Eugenius gave up his spirit to God.

Soon after this, Lysias once went outside the city to review the troops. During the review, when all the soldiers were showing their skill with weapons, one of them, named Orestes, tall and of handsome appearance, was obliged by his rank to present himself to Lysias. Seeing him, Lysias praised him, called him "a true soldier," and ordered him to throw a spear at a target. When Orestes took aim at the mark and drew back his spear, the golden cross he wore on his breast fell out from the shaking, and this was noticed by all and by Lysias himself. Orestes was at once summoned to Lysias, who took the cross from his breast, held it, and asked:

"What is this? Surely you too are among the worshippers of the Crucified?"

"I am a slave of the Crucified, my Lord and my God," answered Orestes, "and I wear this sign of Him upon me to drive away all the evils that threaten me."

"Let this fine soldier too," said Lysias then, "be bound together with Eustratius, who is under judgment, and let him accompany him as far as Nicopolis, where in due time an examination will be made of him."

On Lysias' arrival at Nicopolis, a great multitude of soldiers from the regiment stationed in that city came to him, and all cried out with one voice:

"Lysias! We too are soldiers of our Lord Jesus Christ: do with us what you will!"

At first Lysias was confused. He feared that those who had come might be planning something against him. But seeing that they, taking off their belts, were delivering themselves up like defenceless sheep, he ordered them all to be seized, bound, and thrown into prison. At the same time he began to consider how to put to death all who had declared themselves, and yet not provoke any uprising on the part of their fellow citizens or relatives; but above all he feared Eustratius, namely, that this Christian, during his tortures, might again work a miracle like the former one, and thereby not only confirm the Christians in their faith, but also turn the pagans away from serving idols and convert them to his faith. Therefore Lysias resolved to send Sts. Eustratius and Orestes on the next morning to the city of Sebastia, to the governor Agricolaus.

So he did with the coming of day, and he sent the following letter to Agricolaus:

"To His Highness Agricolaus, governor, Lysias the commander wishes health. Our divine emperors, knowing that in the whole world there is no one who could better than you discern the unknown, have given you authority to govern these lands, for they know that you spend days and nights in ordering public affairs, and that sleep will sooner overcome the ever-wakeful stars than your eyes, until what you strive to accomplish for the common good is done. In a word, since they found

great merits in you alone, they honoured you with that great distinction which you now enjoy. Therefore I too, being a witness of so many excellent qualities in you, send to you this prisoner Eustratius, afflicted with the disease of Christianity, all the more so since I myself could devise nothing that might turn him from his errors: honoured by me with a respectable post in the army under my command, he has become the more arrogant and has caused us much vexation. Although I resorted to threats, he in his haughtiness foretells the future, strengthening himself by his sorceries. And although he saw others subjected to torments, he not only did not abandon his audacity, but regarded the torments themselves as a blessing rather than a torment. Him, and with him Orestes, who holds the same opinions, I send to your wise judgment, in fulfilment of the imperial commands."

With this letter and the written record of the examination of the holy martyrs, the soldiers set out on the road, taking the saints with them. On the way Sts. Eustratius and Orestes sang: "I will run the way of Thy commandments ... give me understanding, and I shall learn Thy commandments" (Ps. 118:32, 73).

Then Eustratius said:

"Brother Orestes! Tell me, how did St. Auxentius die, and in what place?"

St. Orestes said:

"After the judge pronounced the sentence, he begged the soldiers who were leading him away from the court to allow him to go and see you and kiss you for the last time, but no one wished to grant his request, since it was the dinner hour and the slaves of the belly hastened to carry out their orders as quickly as possible; and so Auxentius was at once led into the forest, to a place called *Ororie*. On the way the saint sang the psalm: 'Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord' (Ps. 118:1), and so on to the end. Then he knelt, prayed, stretched out his hands as if receiving some offering, and, having said 'Amen,' he looked around, and seeing me, for I was standing nearby, he called me to him and said:

'Brother Orestes! Tell Lord Eustratius to pray for me, and that he will soon join me, and I am waiting for him.'

Then his head was cut off, and all whom they suspected of belonging to the Christians were driven away from the place of execution. His holy body was secretly taken away at night by the presbyters of Aravrakin. But they could not find his head, and they began to weep and to pray to God that He would show them the head of the holy martyr. And by God's providence a raven began to caw on an oak tree; the presbyters went toward its voice and found the head of the saint lying on the spreading branches of the tree where the raven was sitting. Taking it, the presbyters joined it to the body and carried him to a clean and revered place, and there buried him.

Hearing this, Eustratius wept, and having prayed to God, he said to Orestes:

"Let us too strive, brother, to follow after St. Auxentius."

After five days had passed, the saints were brought to Sebastia, and the governor Agricolaus, having received Lysias' letter, placed the prisoners under the strictest guard. On the next day, in the presence of the people, he ascended the judgment seat in the square and ordered the Christians to be brought before him; and before the trial he commanded the letter sent by Lysias and the first record of the examination of the prisoners to be read aloud to all. After the reading of the letter, he said:

"Do not suppose, Eustratius, that here you will meet with the same torments that you suffered at the hands of Lysias. Rather, submit in advance to the imperial commands and offer sacrifice to the gods, lest you perish by a cruel death."

St. Eustratius asked him:

"O judge! Do the laws have force even for the emperors, or not?"

"Yes," replied the governor, "for the emperors also observe the laws."

"Then," continued Eustratius, "for you alone the laws are something merely written, and not binding in deed?"

"To what end do you say this, impious man?" said the governor. "Who has ever dared to oppose the laws in anything, and when?"

St. Eustratius answered:

"In the laws of the Empire we read the following: violence must not be done either by word or by deed, and the people must be governed

chiefly by means of exhortation. It is necessary that one of two things be done: either that the one in authority exhort the subordinate, desiring to obtain from him what is due, or that the subordinate, already instructed beforehand in what he ought to do, freely and willingly carry out the command of the law. Besides this, the laws contain yet another passage: we command that the judge judge, uniting severity with mercy, so that those who are judged may not feel hatred toward him or turn against him, being terrified by threats, and that no one dare to violate the law trusting in his leniency. Is it so written, judge, or not?"

"Yes," replied the governor.

"I ask you," then said the saint, "to observe such an order of judicial proceeding also toward me."

"Toward you, and toward everyone," replied the governor, "the laws must be observed without fail and with all due respect for them."

"Then I ask you," remarked the saint, "let your severity be joined with mercy, and you, as the wisest of all, be pleased to listen to exhortation more than to exhort yourself, weighing every matter with reason. Otherwise, without any deliberation and without any law, torture, kill, do whatever you wish."

"Speak boldly and freely, whatever you wish," replied the governor. "The trial will be based more on exhortation than on fear."

St. Eustratius asked:

"To which gods do you command me to offer sacrifice?"

"First to Zeus," replied the governor, "and then to Apollo and Poseidon."[6]

"From what wise men, or chroniclers, or prophets have you heard that one must bow down to Zeus and the other so-called gods?"

"From Plato, Aristotle, Hermes[7], and other philosophers," said the governor. "And if you knew them, you would honor their memory, Eustratius, as men inspired by god and marvelous."

6. Zeus, or Jupiter, is the Greco-Roman god, whom the pagans revered as ruler of heaven and earth, father of all gods and men. Apollo is one of the pagan gods most honored by the ancient Greeks and Romans, considered the god of the sun and of intellectual enlightenment, as well as of public order, guardian of law, and the deity of prophecy of the future. Poseidon (Neptune) was regarded as the brother of Zeus and the absolute lord of the seas, rivers and all springs and waterways.

"Their teachings are not unknown to me," answered St. Eustratius, "for I occupied myself with them from my youth and studied well the Hellenic sciences and arts. And if you command, let us begin first with Plato."

The governor began to refer to Plato's work *Timaeus*[8], from which it was supposedly clear that Plato zealously honored the pagan gods and goddesses.[9] On the basis of that same work of the wise Plato, Eustratius proved that he clearly and strongly condemned Zeus himself, whom the pagans consider the ruler of gods and men, of heaven and earth, and affirmed that God is the source and author of every good, which, according to the pagan fables, Zeus by no means was. At the same time the saint pointed out various fables of the pagans, confirming his words also by quoting the most renowned pagan poets, namely Homer and Aeschylus.[10]

"I endure your boldness," said the governor in reply, "only because I myself am fond of discussion. So tell me: how can you acknowledge as God Him whom you honor as God, when He was a man who was condemned and nailed to the cross?"

The saint answered:

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7. *Plato* is the famous Greek philosopher of the 4th century B.C., disciple of the renowned and glorious philosopher Socrates. It is remarkable that in his philosophical views Plato, especially in his teaching about God, the creation of the world and the life beyond the grave, comes close to Christian teaching. – *Aristotle* is the well-known Greek philosopher, disciple and contemporary of Plato, tutor of the Macedonian king Alexander the Great; his mind embraced all the sciences known to the ancient world. – *Hermes*, the so-called Trismegistus (that is, *thrice greatest*), is the fictitious author of a well-known ancient pagan philosophical, so-called theosophical, teaching that arose in the 3rd century A.D.; pagans regarded him as a wise man who received the highest divine revelation and communicated it to people through three sons.

8. *Timaeus* is one of Plato's outstanding works, in which, in the form of a conversation with Timaeus, a disciple of the famous and respected philosopher Pythagoras, whom he sought out in order to become acquainted with the latter's teaching, he sets forth his own thoughts on many higher questions of being.

9. Agricolaus in this connection appealed to the fact that the wise Plato purposely went to Pireia (in Thessaly) to worship a certain pagan goddess; but although Plato's opinions and beliefs were not free of pagan errors, in any case their general character far rose above them and sometimes even came rather close to Christian teaching.

10. *Homer* is the famous most ancient popular poet of Greece, of whose person only fabulous traditions have survived, the author of the two greatest poems of ancient classical literature, the Iliad and the Odyssey, in which the beliefs of the ancient Greeks were vividly reflected. – *Aeschylus* is the most ancient of the great Greek tragic writers, who won worldwide fame deservedly by his works.

"If you agree to listen to me patiently, I will first ask you about some matters about which I intended to question you, and then I will set forth to you in order everything about which you asked me."

"I grant you the right," said the governor, "to speak absolutely everything that you may desire."

"Every man," continued Eustratius, "who possesses a sound mind must conceive of God as righteous, incomprehensible, indescribable and ineffable, unchanging, and surpassing all that exists by His Divine attributes. Do you not also think so, wise judge?"

"Yes, I think so," answered the judge.

"To this one must add," remarked the saint, "that in God there is no lack or imperfection whatsoever, but that He is perfect in everything?"

"Undoubtedly so," agreed Agricolaus.

"Then what?" continued Eustratius further. "Shall we not acknowledge that there exist yet other gods having a perfect and incorruptible Divine nature?"

But this would be absurd, for if they lacked anything whatsoever, even the smallest thing, of Divine perfection and attributes, then, I think, they would already be unworthy to be honored by men as gods: in God there is no lack, as we have said above, and all men must believe in and worship Him.

Agricolaus said:

"Indeed, so it is."

"Then what? Perhaps these gods are the very attributes of the incorruptible and immortal nature, and, being only different manifestations of a single being, all converge, as it were, at one point, in the Deity? But then let them be called not different gods, greater and lesser, but One God, who alone, by His incomparable omnipotence, bears the name of Deity, and not, as you think, that one god lives in heaven, another on earth, a third in the sea. Is it not so, judge?"

The governor Agricolaus, unable to raise any objection to this, was silent for a long time, and at last could only say:

"Leave off your proofs and long-winded objections, and answer only what you were asked: how can you worship as God the Crucified?"

"I will begin," the saint replied, "with the words of your poet Hesiod[11]: In the beginning there was Erebus and Chaos[12], that is, darkness and the watery abyss. When God then brought the world into order and into beautiful being, creating it not from matter that had existed previously but bringing it into being out of non-being, He created man in His own image and after His likeness (Gen. 1:1–31). But the evil angel[13], invested with authority over the host of other angels, of his own will turned away from his Creator, grew proud, was deprived of his dignity and was cast out of heaven by God (Job 4:18; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 1:6). God settled man in Paradise and gave him a commandment that, while enjoying all the blessings of Paradise, he should not touch one particular tree and should not eat of its fruit (Gen. 2:1–25). God appointed this trial for him so that man would not transgress the commandment of God and would not follow the suggestion of the devil, who in everything plots against man; so that he would put to shame the enemy who envied his great dignity, and might become immortal, not subject to corruption. Otherwise man could no longer live in Paradise, must be driven out, and, after living on earth for a certain time, must die. And so the malicious devil, armed with envy against man, employed all his cunning and through the serpent seduced the wife of the first man and led him himself to transgress the commandment, for which he was cast out of Paradise by God and condemned to labor in the sweat of his brow and to corruption (Gen. 3:1–24). Thus the all-malicious devil won the victory and boasted that, because of man's sin, he had subjected him to his power. And when afterwards the human race multiplied, the tormentor-devil strove to enslave every soul to himself. After most people had fallen into lawlessness, God punished the

11. *Hesiod* was a famous ancient Greek poet who, according to the general opinion of the ancients, lived at the same time as Homer or even before him. The surviving fragments of his works preserve many pagan fables and tales about the gods of the ancient Greeks.

12. Chaos, according to the belief of the ancient Greeks, was the yawning, immeasurable expanse of the world that existed before all things: the dark, life-giving first source of all life in the world, which gave birth to *Erebus*, primal darkness, and Night, and through the first afterwards to Day, after which there arose the earth (Gaea), the heaven (Uranus), and so forth. The ancients represented all this in the form of deities; yet even in these beliefs, clouded by crude pagan superstitions, they come somewhat close to the true teaching on the creation of the world.

13. That is, the devil, Satan.

world with a flood, but preserved the righteous man Noah, who had valiantly struggled against the malicious devil, was not defeated by him, and was saved in the ark together with his wife and children (Gen. 6:1–22, 7:1–24, 8:1–22). After the flood, having restored the earth to its original state, God settled Noah on it as its new inhabitant (Gen. 9:1–29). Many years passed; people again multiplied, and again every lawlessness increased among them; all of them were burdened with sins and, after death, were held in the chains of hell, led to perdition by the crafty devil. Then our Creator God had compassion, and, not willing to leave without help the work of His hands, first granted wisdom to the Greeks, so that they might know the almighty God and overcome their adversary the devil. But they, although they seemed somewhat to come to their senses and as if drew near to the path of true worship of God, nevertheless, in some kind of darkness, only reasoned in words, while in deed they again fell into the error of their forefathers, conquered by faith in false gods, and, wandering far from the true path, fell into still greater impiety. Yet even then the great power of God's mercy did not let people fall away completely; God gave them a law, sent prophets, and by many different means showed the path of salvation to the Hebrew people. Nevertheless, people became worse and again repeated the sins of their forefathers and, for their sins, became subject to death. At last our Lord God the Word was pleased to undertake the same struggle as ours, and, becoming like us in everything except sin, showed us victory over our adversary, the devil: He humbled Himself, taking the form of a servant, was born of a Virgin, remaining unchanged in His Godhead, and was the Lamb, in order to deprive the rapacious wolf, the devil, of his strength. Let us now, judge, use one comparison suitable to my account. Suppose that you, being ruler of this city, saw that a bear or some other strong beast attacked the inhabitants of the city, and you sent your servant to kill it; and the servant, obeying your command, went out against the beast but, being unskilled and not strong enough, was unable to overcome it, and, struck by it, fell dead and was eaten: would you then resolve to order another equally unskilled and weak servant to enter the struggle with the beast? And if you yourself were strong and powerful and knew how properly to enter

the struggle with the beast, would you not go out against it yourself, as a skilled and brave fighter, and kill it, and go out not as a master but just as a common servant would, only one who knows how to fight? By your example you would surely teach the other servants to overcome and kill strong beasts should they meet them. In the same way our Lord, the Savior of all, when His servants had fallen defeated and destroyed in the struggle with the devil, Himself humbled Himself, by His ineffable mercy, became incarnate through the Most Pure and Most Spotless Virgin, took the form of a servant, and in everything became like us except sin; and, coming forth into public ministry, as it were concealed Himself from the malicious devil by His voluntary and wise humility, and defeated him, since he attacked Him, the Lord, as a mere man; and by His saving crucifixion sundered the whole power of the enemy, teaching us as well—looking upon His struggle—to contend with the devil in the same way and to overcome the power of the devil. He Himself took our sins upon Himself, and gave us His own impassibility; He raised those held in Hades and granted us the possibility of being children of God, having in Him an invincible support and hoping for the heavenly crowns for our struggles. We are conquered in the body, but we conquer in the spirit; we are subject to corruption and death and at the same time are incorruptible and immortal; therefore we turn away from your intemperance and animal life and strive for a life equal to the angels and for eternal being. We do not look downward, like animals, but gaze up to heaven, and, being in flesh, we imitate in our lives the bodiless ones. We know that our spirit constantly struggles with the flesh; by our wisdom and moderation we turn ourselves away from attachment to this mortal body, and by vigorously rejecting its sensuality and lustful desires, we constantly train ourselves to raise our thoughts to heaven and, by patience and abstinence, to mortify our earthly members. We feed on reflection upon our Most Pure Lord, and our faith is unshakable. Such and still greater blessings God has granted us, He Himself having clothed Himself in human flesh. But you, as is known to all, have enslaved yourselves to the flesh, and therefore you call gods those who, by your own tales, performed impure and shameless deeds; you build shrines for them and render them honors. You shun commu-

nion with heaven and are always in disquiet, not only from fear of some calamity, but also because you strenuously strive for temporal well-being and, waking, dream as if in sleep. You die not only in body but in soul, and deliver yourselves to eternal perdition; but we, from our Lord Jesus Christ, have been taught that our flesh, decayed under the universal law of corruption and death and turned to dust, will live again, reunited with the soul, and will receive a nature incorruptible. All this I have told you briefly so that you, having learned the truth from me, may renounce your false gods."

The ruler Agricolaus patiently heard out to the end the wise speech of St. Eustratius, and then said:

"We have no right to discuss the decision and will of the emperors, and must only obey their laws and carry out their commands. Therefore cease your useless chatter, go and offer sacrifice to the gods; if not, you will endure such tortures as you have never even heard of."

St. Eustratius answered:

"Then why did you cause us so much vain labor, and why have you not long since begun to torment us?"

After that the tormentor ordered an iron bed to be brought, heated to the highest degree, and first laid St. Orestes upon it; and he said to St. Eustratius:

"You must first look upon the torments awaiting you in him, and afterwards you yourself will be subjected to them."

Meanwhile St. Orestes, approaching the heated bed, felt fear, and, looking at St. Eustratius, said:

"Pray for me, for fear is taking hold of me."

"Do not lose heart, brother Orestes," St. Eustratius answered him, "for all this only seems frightful and tormenting; in truth you will feel no bodily pain if only you lie down boldly upon the bed with hope in God, since the Lord Himself will be our helper and defender. Remember the firmness of spirit of St. Auxentius and the other saints, and do not fall short of them: the torments here end quickly, while in heaven an eternal reward awaits us!"

Hearing this, St. Orestes boldly and firmly mounted the heated bed, and, standing upon it, signed himself with the sign of the Cross and at once lay down upon the heated bed. Then he cried out in a loud voice:

"Lord Jesus Christ! Into Thy hands I commend my spirit!"

And he gave up his holy soul to the Lord, and St. Eustratius exclaimed:

"Amen!"

Immediately after this Agricolaus commanded that St. Eustratius be led away to prison. Here Eustratius, having prayed to God as was his custom, called the servant who was with him and said to him:

"Bring, my son, a sheet of paper, and let us draw up a will, for I hope that tomorrow I too shall stand before my Master, Christ."

When the paper was brought, he wrote a will, in which he expressed his desire that his body be translated to Aravraka, and that no one dare take anything from his remains, but that his whole body be laid intact in the place called Analikozora, together with the holy Auxentius, Orestes, Mardarius, and Eugenius, for these saints had adjured Eustratius that after their death their bodies should be laid untouched beside his. St. Eustratius bequeathed all his estates for the support of the servants of the Church, and ordered his movable property to be divided equally: first, among the poor and needy, and secondly, among his sisters. He ordered all his slaves to be set free, and appointed rewards for them all.

Having written his will, the saint fasted all day and spent the whole following night in prayer. That night, with the help of gold given to the guards, blessed Blaise, Bishop of Sebaste, who was then in hiding because of the persecution of Christians, came to him. He had heard of Eustratius' great wisdom and how he had put the governor and his gods to shame. Entering the prison, he fell to the ground and bowed down before the saint, saying:

"Blessed are you, my son Eustratius, for Almighty God has so strengthened you. I beseech you, remember me in your prayers."

"Do not bow down before me, spiritual father," replied St. Eustratius, "but, mindful of the rank granted to you, expect from us laymen the reverence due to you."

Then they sat down, and Eustratius said to the bishop:

"Since, by the will of God, tomorrow at the third hour of the day, as was clearly revealed to me, I shall stand before my Master Christ, take this will of mine and read it."

When the bishop had read it, the saint asked him and the clergy who had come with him to sign the will, and took an oath from the bishop that he himself would take the body of Eustratius and that of St. Orestes, bury them in the place appointed in the will, and endeavor to fulfill all the rest that was written therein, promising him, for his labors and cares, a reward from our Lord Jesus Christ in the life to come. At the same time, St. Eustratius entreated the bishop to deem him worthy of Communion in the Divine Mysteries, since he had not received this holy sacrament from the very time he was taken to martyrdom. When all that was required for the service had been brought and the Bloodless Sacrifice offered, Eustratius approached and received the Holy Mysteries. And suddenly a light like lightning shone in the prison, and a voice was heard:

"Eustratius! You have striven valiantly. Go forth, then, and ascend to heaven to receive your crown!"

All who were there heard this voice and fell face down upon the ground in fear. The bishop spent the whole night with St. Eustratius, delighting in conversation with him; but when dawn broke, he departed, promising to carry out exactly everything written in the will.

When morning came, Agricolaus sat upon the judge's seat in its usual place in the city and ordered St. Eustratius to be brought. When Eustratius appeared, the governor called him to himself and spoke to him privately, away from the others:

"I call all-seeing Truth to witness, Eustratius, that my heart grieves deeply for you, because you will not obey the imperial command. But at least, if only for appearance's sake, pretend before the people that you share our faith, and bow down to the gods outwardly alone; in your heart believe in and pray to your God, and He will forgive you for what you have done, not of your own will, but under compulsion. Do not wish to perish like some criminal, you who are so learned and wise. If I myself were not in danger from this, I would not have demanded even that

of you. I have put many of your fellow believers to death and had pity on none of them, but I pity you exceedingly, and I tell you that on your account I have spent this whole night sleepless and in great sorrow."

"Do not concern yourself with this," replied St. Eustratius, "and do not bring trouble upon yourself because of me, but do what your emperors have commanded you. I will bow down to your gods neither hypocritically nor in any other way, but will confess my God before all, and praise Him in the midst of all. Be assured that the torments to which you subject me are bliss to me; if you wish, put this to the test."

The governor covered his face with his hands and wept for a long time, so that all the people standing around him noticed it. And all understood that he pitied the innocent Eustratius, and wept aloud. Great lamentation was heard throughout the city. At last St. Eustratius said to the judge:

"May God Most High destroy the evil cunning of your father, Satan! For Satan devised this weeping to tempt me, so as to place an obstacle in the way of the reward awaiting me. Do what you have resolved, for I am a servant of the Master Christ, and will not submit to the command of the emperors; and I abhor the abomination of idols: hateful to me are both the idols themselves and those who bow down before them!"

Agricolaus saw Eustratius' steadfast devotion to the Christian faith and his great love for Christ, and could scarcely utter the following final sentence concerning him:

"I command that Eustratius, who has disobeyed the command of the emperors and refused to sacrifice to the gods, be burned, so that for his obstinacy he may perish in the fire."

Having said this, he rose and hastily withdrew to the praetorium[14]. As the saint was led away to be burned, he prayed aloud:

"I magnify and exalt Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast looked upon my lowliness and not left me in the hands of the enemy, but hast saved my soul from distress! And now, O Master, may Thy hand cover me, and may Thy mercy come upon me, for my soul is troubled and grieves as it departs from this wretched and defiled body of mine. May the enemy's

14. In antiquity this was the name of the inner chamber of a military commander in the camp, and also of a judge.

cunning never meet it and ensnare it in darkness for the sins, unknown and known, that I have committed in this life! Be merciful to me, O Master, and may my soul not behold the gloomy appearance of the wicked demons, but may Thy bright and most radiant Angels receive it! Glorify Thy Holy Name, and by Thy power bring me before Thy Divine judgment. When I am judged, may the hand of the prince of this world not seize me and cast me, a sinner, into the depths of hell; but stand before me and be my Savior and Defender, for these bodily torments are joys to Thy servants. Have mercy, O Lord, upon my soul, defiled by the passions of this life, and receive it, cleansed by repentance and confession. For Thou art blessed unto the ages of ages. Amen.[8377]"

When the saint had finished his prayer and the furnace was already glowing hot, he made the sign of the cross and entered it, singing and saying:

"Lord Jesus Christ! Into Thy hands I commend my spirit!"

Thus he died. The fire did not harm his holy body, nor did it even touch a single hair upon him. He died on the 13th day of December. Blessed Blaise, Bishop of Sebaste, took the relics of the holy Eustratius and Orestes, and fulfilled all that was written in the martyr's will,[15] glorifying the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the one God in Trinity, to Whom be glory and dominion unto the ages. Amen.

The Miracle of the Five Holy Martyrs

Near Constantinople was a monastery called Olympus, in which a church had been built in the name of the five holy martyrs: Eustratius, Auxentius, Eugenius, Mardarius, and Orestes. From ancient times it had been customary for the emperor and the patriarch to come to this monastery on the feast commemorating the holy martyrs and to give as much as was needed for the monks' sustenance. For the founder of the monastery had decreed that his monks should neither labor in the fields

15. Sts. Martyrs Eustratius, Auxentius, Eugene, Mardarius and Orestes died at the beginning of the 4th century. Afterwards, in their native city of Aravrakos, where their honorable relics were buried, a church was erected in their honor, and miracles were wrought from their relics. Before the gates of Constantinople there was a monastery in honor of these martyrs, called Olympus. Here the patriarch served each year on the day of their memory. At present their relics rest in Rome, in the church of St. Apollinaris of Ravenna.

nor cultivate vineyards, but, devoting themselves wholly to the intercession of the holy martyrs, should care only for their salvation. And because the monks strictly kept this decree of the founder, the holy martyrs never ceased to care for the needs of the monastery. Yet God's mercy is commonly inseparable from trial, so that it may become all the more evident that those who hope in God and seek Him will lack no good thing, even more than those who rely upon their wealth.

And so God, the common Provider for all, desiring to glorify still more the place dedicated to His Passion-bearers, and to visit with His mercy, amid their privations and sorrows, their worshippers who struggled there, arranged matters so that during the feast a terrible storm arose from the sea, with heavy rain and cold, and no one came from the city to the feast. The monks of the monastery, having sung Vespers and the canon, were disheartened, since they had absolutely nothing to eat; they even reproached the holy martyrs, saying before their icon:

"Tomorrow we shall leave this place and go our several ways, each to seek sustenance for himself."

When twilight fell, the gatekeeper came to the abbot and said:

"Give your blessing, Father, for me to bring in a man who has arrived from the emperor with two laden camels."

The abbot gave his blessing, and a certain dignified man entered and said:

"The emperor has sent you provisions and wine."

The monks said a prayer, brought in what had been sent, and all ate and drank, setting aside what remained for later. Before they had even dispersed to their cells, the gatekeeper entered again and said that a messenger from the empress had arrived. He was brought in and told the abbot that the empress had sent them choice fish and ten gold coins. The messenger had not yet finished speaking when the gatekeeper entered again and reported that a man from the patriarch had arrived. When the new messenger was brought in, he gave the abbot the church vessels, saying, "It pleases the patriarch to serve the Divine Liturgy here tomorrow." [16]

The abbot, turning to those who had come, said:

"What is pleasing to God, that He will do. Will you spend the night here, or depart at once?"

They answered:

"If there is room for us, we shall remain here until morning." The abbot ordered that they be lodged on the church porch and, as he sent them away for the night, asked their names. The one who had come from the emperor called himself Auxentius, the one from the empress—Eugenius, and the one who had brought the vessel from the patriarch—Mardarius.

During the singing of Matins, two men entered the church. After the kathismas[17] the abbot ordered that the appointed reading about the sufferings of the holy martyrs be read, but the monks said:

"We shall not read it, for no one has come from the city for the feast."

Then an unknown man who had entered the church said:

"Give me the book; I will read."

They gave it to him, and when he came to the passage where it is written, "Eustratius was shod in iron boots with sharp nails," he sighed and struck the church floor with the staff that was in his hand. And behold, the staff, driven into the floor, put forth branches and became a tree.

Those standing behind understood whom they were seeing and asked:

"Was this for yourself that you did, Eustratius?"

"No," he answered. "My former sufferings are insignificant in comparison with the reward for them; this was done so that our feast might not be without those coming from the city."

And as soon as he had said this, all five became invisible. But when the abbot came from the church, he found the monastery's cellar full of

16. In the poor Olympus monastery there was of course not everything needed for a stately patriarchal service, and the patriarch, if he wished to serve there, naturally had to send church vessels, vestments and so forth from his own household.

bread and fish, and all the vessels that had been emptied full of wine. They hastened to inform the emperor and the patriarch of the miracle that had taken place, and they came to the monastery and all glorified God and praised His holy martyrs. The staff that had been turned into a tree was divided and distributed as a blessing, and on that day many sick people were healed through the prayers of the holy Passion-bearers.

Kontakion of the Martyr Eustratius, Tone 2:

Thou didst appear as a most radiant lamp to those sitting in the darkness of ignorance, O Passion-bearer; for, girded with faith as with a spear, thou didst not fear the enemies' assaults, O Eustratius, thou most eloquent of rhetoricians.

Another Kontakion of the Martyr Eustratius, Tone 3:

Proclaiming divine things before the most lawless, thou didst endure blows with a most courageous heart; wondrously thou didst shine forth with signs from God and quench the lofty flame of delusion. Wherefore we honor thee, O most blessed Martyr of Christ, Eustratius.

* * *

Suffering of the Holy Martyr Lucia

Страдание святой мученицы Лукии

When the fame of the holy Martyr Agatha had spread throughout all Sicily, and the inhabitants of Syracuse[18] were flocking to Catana[19] to venerate the holy tomb of the Martyr, it happened that a maiden named Lucia, of noble birth and held in honor by all the people of Syracuse, went with others to the feast, together with her

17. The kathismata form an indispensable part of the Morning Service and consist of the reading of psalms with the addition of brief doxologies. The entire Psalter, containing 150 psalms, is divided into 20 kathismata, each of which is divided into three glories. This division took place in ancient times.

18. Syracuse was one of the first Greek colonies on the eastern shore of the island of Sicily, afterwards the largest and richest city of the island.

19. Catania was an ancient city on the eastern shore of the island of Sicily; at the present time it is a prosperous city of learning and commerce, a populous city with a population of more than 100 thousand.

mother Eutychia, who had suffered from a flow of blood for four years and could be healed by no medical remedy. During the church service at the Martyr's tomb, that Gospel was read in which the woman with a flow of blood is remembered, who was healed by touching the hem of Christ's garment. While the Gospel was being read, Lucia said to her mother:

"If you believe, mother, what is being read, then believe also that holy Agatha, who suffered for the name of Christ, has been vouchsafed to stand before Him for Whose Name she suffered. Therefore touch her tomb with faith, and you will be healed."

When the church service had ended and the people had dispersed, mother and daughter fell before the tomb of the holy Martyr and began with tears to implore her aid. They prayed for a long time, and at last Lucia fell asleep and in a dream saw the holy Martyr Agatha, standing amid Angels and adorned with precious stones. She said to Lucia:

"My sister Lucia, maiden of the Lord! Why do you ask me for that which you yourself can grant at this very moment? Your faith brings help to your mother, and she is already well. And as the city of Catana is glorified through me, so shall Syracuse be adorned through you, for in your maidenhood you have prepared for Christ a dwelling pleasing to Him."

Lucia awoke at once, arose trembling, and said to her mother:

"Mother, mother! You are healed! I beseech you, in the name of that saint who healed you by her prayers: never again speak to me of a bridegroom (for she was already betrothed), and do not desire to see mortal fruit from my sinful body; but whatever you had appointed to give me for marriage to a mortal man, give to me, that I may go to the Immortal Bridegroom, Christ the Lord, the Guardian of my virginity."

Her mother answered her:

"Having carefully guarded for nine years all that remained of your father's possessions, I have increased your inheritance rather than diminished it; and whatever I have acquired myself, and may yet acquire, is likewise at your disposal. But first bury me, and then do with all the property as you please."

"Listen to my counsel, mother," Lucia said to her. "He is not especially pleasing to God who gives Him what he cannot carry away with him or use for his own benefit. But if you wish to do something truly pleasing to God, give Him what you can use for yourself. When you are dying, you will no longer need anything earthly, and what you then have to give, you will not be able to carry away with you. Therefore, while you are alive and well, give your possessions to Christ, and begin now to give Him all that you intended to give me."

Thus Lucia spoke to her mother every day, until at last the distribution of their property began, and it was spent each day on the needs of the poor. Lucia's betrothed learned of the sale of estates, precious vessels, and jewels, and, grieved by this, began to question the nurse of his bride:

"What does this mean?" he asked. "Why do I hear of the sudden sale of estates and precious things?"

The nurse, a sensible woman, answered:

"Your bride has learned that an inherited estate worth as much as 1000 gold pieces and more is for sale, and she wishes to buy it for you; therefore she is selling some possessions to raise that sum."

Her bridegroom believed her words and, thinking the matter concerned a purchase of property, made no objection; he even encouraged his bride and her mother to sell their possessions. But as soon as he learned that everything had been given to the poor and needy, widows and orphans, and spent on strangers and servants of God, he went straight away and denounced his bride to Paschasius, the governor, saying that she was a Christian and therefore an enemy of the emperor's commands.[20]

Paschasius summoned Lucia to him and at first tried by words to persuade her to sacrifice to the idols.

Blessed Lucia answered him:

"A living sacrifice, and pure and undefiled piety before God and the Father, is to care for orphans and widows in their afflictions. For the last three years I have done nothing but offer sacrifice to the living

20. That is, the edicts of the Roman emperors ordering all Roman citizens to offer sacrifices to the pagan gods.

God. Now I have nothing left to offer Him, and I offer Him myself; let Him do with His sacrifice whatever He wills."

"You may tell these words," Paschasius remarked, "to Christians like yourself; but you speak of them in vain to me, who am charged with enforcing the emperor's laws."

"You follow the emperor's laws," Lucia answered, "but I obey the laws of God; you fear the emperors, but I fear God; you are unwilling to anger the emperors, but I carefully guard against angering God; you strive to please the emperors, but I desire to please Christ alone. Therefore do what seems most advantageous to you; I shall do what I know will be for my good."

"You have consumed your inheritance and squandered it with your companions," said Paschasius, "and so you speak like a harlot."

"I have placed my inheritance in a good place," Lucia answered him, "and have never allowed corrupters of soul and body to approach me."

Paschasius asked:

"And whom do you call corrupters of soul and body?"

Lucia answered:

"You are corrupters of the soul, of whom the Apostle says, 'Evil company corrupts good morals' (1 Cor. 15:33): you lead people's souls into adultery,[21] so that, forsaking the Heavenly Bridegroom, that is, their Creator, they follow the devil by serving powerless and soulless idols. And corrupters of the body are those who have preferred fleeting pleasures to eternal bliss and set passing delights above everlasting joys."

Paschasius said:

"Your prating will cease and fall silent when it comes to tortures and wounds."

Lucia answered:

"The words of God will never be silenced."

"What, are you God?" Paschasius objected.

21. In ecclesiastical language, adultery is understood not only as the unlawful union of a husband with another's wife, the shameful actions contrary to the seventh commandment, and impure thoughts, but sometimes (as here chiefly) also impiety and idolatry.

"I am a handmaid of God," Lucia said, "and therefore I spoke the words of God, as He Himself also said: 'For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you' (Mt. 10:20)."

Paschasius said:

"So then, is the Holy Spirit in you, and is it He Who speaks through you?"

Lucia answered:

"The Apostle says that those who lead a pure life are temples of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in them (1 Cor. 3:16)."

Paschasius said:

"Then I shall order you taken to a brothel, so that the Spirit of God may depart from you when you have been defiled."

"Without the consent of the spirit, the body can never be defiled," Lucia answered. "Even if you put incense in my hand and by force make this hand cast it upon an idol's altar, God will only mock you when He sees this; for He judges us for our thoughts and voluntary deeds, not for acts that others compel us to perform by force. He merely permits the forcible loss of virginity, as He permits temptations, robbery, and paganism. Therefore, if you order me to be violated, you will only increase the reward for my purity."

"I shall order you to be dishonored unto death," said Paschasius, "if you do not obey the emperor's command."

Lucia answered:

I have already told you that you will never bend my will to consent to sin; whatever you may do with my body, the servant of Christ despises all of it.

Then Paschasius, that debauched and unrighteous judge, summoned the keepers of brothels and gave the saint over to them, saying:

"Call the people together, and let them mock her until she dies."

When the saint was led away to be mocked, God made her so heavy that she could not be moved from her place. Many people, at the command of the tormentor, pulled at her and strove to move her from the spot, but all who strove grew weary and broke out in sweat, while the Virgin of the Lord stood unshaken. They brought ropes, bound her hands and feet, and again strove with all their might to drag her, but

she remained immovable, like a mountain. Paschasius was dismayed and did not know what to do. He called together soothsayers, sorcerers and all the priests of the idols, and ordered them to perform incantations around Lucy in order to move her, but they achieved nothing: she stood as though nailed to the ground, and she could not be moved a single step. Many pairs of oxen were brought, which were to pull her away, and still she remained unmoved.

At last Paschasius asked her:

"What sorcery are you practicing?"

"It is not my sorcery," she said, "but the power of the grace of God."

"What, then, is the reason that a thousand men cannot move you, a weak girl?"

"Even if you bring ten thousand men, they too will feel that the Holy Spirit says to me: 'A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee' (Ps. 90:6)."

The wretched judge was sorely tormented in his impious soul. Confusion came upon him.

"Why are you tormented," asked the holy virgin, "and why are you troubled? You have already tested that I am truly a temple of the living God, so believe this. If you are still not convinced, then go on with your business."

Paschasius became even more indignant and confused, seeing how the saint mocked his contrivances. He ordered a huge fire to be kindled around her and for pitch, sulphur and boiling oil to be poured over her. But she, protected by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, remained unmoved and unharmed, and said to the tormentor:

"I prayed to our Lord Jesus Christ that this fire might have no power over me, and asked that those who trust in Christ might mock you; I asked for my torments to continue, so that I might free the believers from the fear of torment and deprive the unbelievers of the opportunity to scoff at Christianity."

Then some of Paschasius' attendants, wishing to lead him out of his difficult and perplexing position, ordered the saint to be struck in the throat with a sword, and then withdrew home together with Paschasi-

us. Yet the saint, although she had been grievously wounded, did not lose her strength, and she addressed the people, saying:

"I bring you the good tidings that peace is granted to the Church of God, for Diocletian has renounced the kingdom, and Maximian is now dead. And just as the city of Catania has as its intercessor before God my sister in God, Saint Agatha, so know also that I have been given by God as the protector of this city, if only you, fulfilling His will, believe in this."

While Lucy, with her throat pierced by the sword, was speaking these words, Paschasius, bound in iron fetters, was suddenly led before her eyes. The matter was this: the Sicilians had secretly, without the knowledge of their governor, sent to Rome an accusation of how ruthlessly Paschasius had ravaged the land, taking the property of the inhabitants by every kind of violence. And at this very time an order came from Rome that Paschasius be brought there in chains for trial. There, after interrogation, he was condemned to death and executed by beheading with the sword. When he was led past the saint in chains, she was still alive, and though mortally wounded she stood unmoving, and life did not leave her until priests came and she received the Most Pure and Life-giving Mysteries of Christ; and only when all, at the conclusion of the communion, had said "Amen," did the holy martyr commend her pure soul into the hands of the Lord[22]. She was honorably buried at the place of her torment, and over her relics a church was erected in her name and to the glory of God, One in Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to Whom be glory forever. Amen.

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Memory of Venerable Arsenius of Latros

Память преподобного Арсения Латрского

Venerable Arsenius was from Constantinople, of noble and pious parents. He gained the favor of the emperor and was made a mil-

22. St. Martyr Lucy suffered martyrdom in 304. Her relics were first transferred from Syracuse to Italy, then to Metz (formerly a considerable French city in Lorraine; now a first-class fortress in German Lorraine); part of the relics, which were in Constantinople, were transferred to Venice.

itary commander and patrician[23] of Kiverriotes[24]. Once, while sailing with an army on the sea, a terrible storm arose, and the ships with all who were on them sank; he alone was saved. After this Arsenius renounced the world, took the monastic habit, and devoted himself entirely to ascetic prayer, subduing his flesh with fasting, unceasing vigils and heavy chains. After considerable labors in a certain desert place, he came to Mount Latros in Asia Minor[25], where by prayer and the sign of the cross he put to death a deadly asp[26]; then he moved to the monastery of Kellivaris[27], where he was made abbot, but from there he withdrew into a certain cave, whence by prayer he drove away wild beasts that came near. Brethren gathered around him, and he guided them by the saving example of his own life and by edifying instructions. For a whole week the Venerable would usually shut himself in his narrow cell in deep silence and solitude; on Sundays, however, he taught the brethren and took food. By such heavy and laborious ascetic exploits and virtuous life he attained such perfection that he was nourished by an Angel, with his staff turned bitter waters into sweet, and, having worked many other miracles, he died peacefully in the midst of the brethren[28].

* * *

NOTES

8377. This prayer of St. Eustratius, offered before his death, has been taken into ecclesiastical use and is read at the Saturday Midnight Office in the following form: "Magnifying, I magnify Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast regarded my humility, and hast not shut me up in the hands of mine enemies, but hast delivered my soul from distress. And now,

23. "Patricians" was the name of the highest estate in the Roman and later the Byzantine Empire, corresponding to our hereditary nobility.

24. In Caria, the south-western region of Asia Minor.

25. Mount Latras, properly Laimos, is a mountain range in Caria which separates the coastal strip on the Mediterranean from the interior regions of Asia Minor near the cities of Miletus and Amisus. The name Latros, meaning "Mountain of Service," it received from the fact that here were located 11 Orthodox monasteries, administered in the Middle Ages by one archimandrite. Under Turkish rule the monasteries were destroyed.

26. The asp is a special species of snake whose venom is very strong and often deadly.

27. In Caria, in the south-west of Asia Minor.

28. The time of the life of Venerable Arsenius of Latros is not known exactly; it is approximately presumed to be between the 8th and 10th centuries.

O Master, let Thy hand cover me, and let Thy mercy come upon me, for my soul is troubled and in pain at its departure from this wretched and defiled body of mine, lest at some time the wicked adversary meet it with counsel and trip it in darkness, because of the sins I have committed in this life, both those unknown and those known to me. Be merciful to me, O Master, and let not my soul behold the gloomy countenance of the wicked demons, but let Thy bright and most radiant angels receive it. Give glory to Thy holy Name, and by Thy power raise me up to Thy divine judgment, when I am judged, lest the hand of the prince of this world seize me, a sinner, to cast me into the depths of hell; but stand by me and be my Savior and Protector, for these bodily torments are joys to Thy servants. Have mercy, O Lord, on my soul, defiled by the passions of this life, and receive it, purified by repentance and confession, for Thou art blessed unto the ages of ages. Amen."



THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 14

14 декабря

New Calendar December 14 · Old Calendar December 27 (civil dates)

Sufferings of the Holy Martyrs Thyrsus, Leucius, Callinicus, Philemon, Apollonius, and the Others with Them

Страдание святых мучеников Фирса, Левкия, Каллиника, Филимона, Аполлония и прочих с ними

The Holy Martyrs Thyrsus, Leucius, and Callinicus were born in the region of Bithynia[1] and were brought up in the city of Caesarea[2]. They suffered for Christ in the reign of the Emperor Decius[3] in the following manner.

One of the provincial governors, named Cumbricius, came to Caesarea from Nicomedia[4] and zealously upheld idolatry there, diligently attending to the idol-temples and sacrifices, and to all that was pleasing to the enemy of the human race, the devil. Moreover, he compelled all the local inhabitants, some by flattery and others by threats. Meanwhile, among the citizens of Caesarea there was a certain Leucius, a man honest, wise, learned, and noble. Seeing the lawlessness that was taking place, he was deeply grieved in soul and burned ever more with zeal for God. At last he could no longer conceal the flame of zeal that burned within him, and he would no longer hide the true faith which he confessed. Unexpectedly he appeared before the governor and said:

"Why, Cumbricius, do you arm yourself, unhappy man, against your own soul, honoring insensible and deaf idols, and drawing many other

1. Bithynia was a province of the Roman Empire in the northwestern part of Asia Minor.
2. Here Caesarea in Palestine is meant.
3. He reigned from 249 to 251 A.D.

people after you into the same sorrowful error? Such people appear more insensible than stones and trees, for they do not wish to know their true God and Savior, and they do not desire to walk in the light, having forsaken the darkness of error."

The frenzied governor, unable to bear the truth spoken to him, flew into a rage at these words and at once, without any interrogation, ordered Leucius to be beaten. But Leucius, accepting the sufferings willingly, gave thanks to God, and thereby brought the tormentor into still greater fury; for this he was subjected to torments until those who beat him were exhausted. His body, broken by the blows, grew weak, and he prayed for complete release from the body, desiring to depart to the Lord. The governor himself helped to fulfill this desire: he ordered the martyr to be led outside the city and his head to be cut off. As the torturers led the saint to execution, he walked without any fear or agitation, showing no sign of pain or torment on his face, but shining wholly with joy and blessedness, as though he were being led not to execution but to a crowning. Far outside the city his head was cut off, and he passed to heaven to receive the incorruptible crown for his ascetic struggle.

The report of Cumbricius's cruelty soon spread through all the neighboring lands, and Christians began to hide for fear of his savagery. But the blessed Thyrsus (although he had not yet been baptized, and was only among the catechumens), armed with zeal for God, came before the tormentor and said: "Greetings to you, most illustrious governor!"

And when the governor returned his greeting, Thyrsus continued:

"Is it permitted for each person to say whatever he wishes before you judges, or must one wait for your command and otherwise not utter a single sound?"

The governor, as if forgetting what he had done to Leucius, answered:

4. Nicomedia was a city in Bithynia. Later, in the time of Diocletian and Constantine the Great, it was the residence of the Roman emperors.

"It is permitted; to this day this freedom of speech has not been taken from anyone, especially if one has something to say that tends to the common good."

Then Thyrsus said:

"And what can be said that is more useful than what is useful for the soul? Behold, I see that you oppress many and deprive them of salvation, turning them away from the true faith and, out of malice, drawing them to the service of idols. By this you kindle upon your own soul the whole fiery Gehenna. Therefore I have resolved to speak with you boldly and freely, and to learn from you why you have made it law, forsaking the Creator of heaven and earth and all men, that people should worship the work of human hands, as if saying to a tree, 'You are my father' (as the holy prophet Jeremiah also rebukes the idolaters, Jer. 2:27), and to a stone, 'You have begotten me'? And why is all your care directed to persuading all people (if it were possible) to share with you your pernicious way of thinking?"

To this the governor said:

"Your untimely and out-of-place speech shows that you are infected with Christianity. However, leave these idle questions and their false solutions to those people who busy themselves in schools and are not devoted to the cares of public affairs; and now obey the imperial command and offer sacrifice to the gods. If you do not do this, you will receive from us retribution for your words, in the torments prepared for you."

"Since you are rational creatures of God," the saint replied, "you ought not to do anything unreasonably or without careful examination. But if you wish to obey the senseless command of your emperor, then do what you have been commanded."

Cumbricius said:

"I think it is our indulgence that makes you so arrogant. But seeing that you are a sensible and intelligent man, I advise you to show obedience and so escape torments. Go, then, to the altar and render due honor to the gods, for in this way you will receive forgiveness for your former fault, become a friend of the great emperor, and spend all the rest of your life with us in great honor."

"I have pondered this matter much," the blessed one answered, "and do not think that you have found me unprepared or not having considered everything beforehand. For I first deliberated on the whole matter for a long time within myself, and after careful investigation became convinced that your gods are lifeless idols and their temples are impure; and I laughed at them and chose the pure and true Christian faith. So do not delay to carry out what the emperor has commanded you concerning us Christians."

These words of the saint threw the tormentor into a rage, and he at once ordered some of his servants, distinguished by their strength, to strike the saint firmly with their fists, and then to bind straps to his hands and feet and pull him with all their might in different directions. When this was done, the limbs of his body came out and were torn from their joints, but the martyr endured this patiently and with a bright countenance. The tormentor commanded that his eyes be pierced with nails, his jaws broken, and his teeth knocked out with bronze hammers. Yet the saint, even amid the torments, laughed at the tormentor, and thereby provoked him still more. Cumbricius ordered tin to be melted, an iron bed to be prepared, and the martyr to be laid upon it face downward; and he himself summoned his magicians and persuaders, so that they might seduce the martyr with words. They began to urge the saint to show obedience to the governor, even if only for a time and outwardly.

"Through this," they said, "you will be delivered from cruel torments and will receive many blessings, and your God will forgive you, knowing the weakness of human nature, and will not be angry, for He is, as we have heard, good and very merciful."

The martyr answered:

"It is precisely because my God is good and very merciful that I endure torments for Him; for if you, although you hear of the endless torments awaiting you, do not turn from your errors to the path of truth, why should I not bravely endure temporary sufferings, for which the reward will be the Kingdom of Heaven?"

After these words of the martyr, they began to pour boiling tin upon him. But the tin brought in a cauldron instantly poured out in a stream,

scalded and destroyed many of the pagans standing nearby. The saint, however, rose from the bed unharmed and in perfect health, and his eyes again saw as before. At the sight of this miracle all were struck with terror, and the governor himself was greatly amazed. Yet, although he ought to have come to know Him who created all that exists, he remained in blindness of mind through his own fault; thus were fulfilled over him the words of Scripture: "You have seen many things, but have not observed them; your ears were open, but you did not hear" (Is. 42:20).

He became still more enraged at the martyr, and calling him a sorcerer and magician, subjected him to still greater torments. But the saint bore everything bravely; and a voice from on high was heard strengthening the ascetic, a voice which brought the pagans into great fear and confirmed the believers in their faith.

Fearing to continue the torments to his own shame, the tormentor ordered the martyr to be bound and thrown into prison, and himself went home, pondering with what still more cruel tortures he might afflict Thyrsus. Meanwhile the saint in prison prayed fervently that God would vouchsafe him holy baptism. And behold, suddenly, by the grace of God, at night his bonds were loosed, and the prison doors opened of themselves. Coming out of the prison, the saint went to the bishop of Caesarea, who was then hiding from the persecution. The bishop, seeing the martyr, immediately fell at his feet, for he had already heard of his courage and endurance and greatly honored him. But the martyr, raising the bishop and himself falling at his feet, said:

"Do not do this, most honorable father! Do not anticipate the reverence which I ought to render to you, for I have come not to bless, but to receive a blessing."

The bishop said to him:

"It is for you to bless us, since you have openly shown great power of virtue and have clothed yourself in the most radiant robe of the Spirit by enduring such cruel torments."

"For this very reason I have come here," the martyr answered, "to be clothed in the robe of incorruption, being born anew of water and

the Spirit, for I have not yet been vouchsafed holy baptism. So fulfill my desire without delay and perform baptism upon me."

The bishop at once baptized Thyrsus, who, coming up out of the font, cried out:

"Lord Jesus Christ, my God, who hast vouchsafed me to be born anew of water and the Spirit! Grant me also through sufferings to be vouchsafed the baptism with which Thou wast baptized, and, having drunk of Thy cup of sufferings, to be a partaker of Thy death."

After conversing with the bishop and taking leave of him, the Martyr of Christ returned to the prison, a wondrous light going before him, and holy Angels following after, as some of the worthy clearly saw. In the prison he passed his time in his accustomed prayers.

At this time a certain official named Silvanus, a Persian by birth, a cruel and merciless man, wishing to show himself a well-wisher and a like-minded servant of the emperor, asked the emperor to grant him, Silvanus, the authority to inquire whether the tormentors appointed for the destruction of Christians were really carrying out the imperial commands. Having received this authority, he came to Nicaea[5] and to Caesarea, offering sacrifices to idols everywhere and sealing the pagan festivals with Christian blood. Among other things, he was informed concerning the great Thyrsus, that he could not be overcome[6] by any tortures, and that at the same time he astonished people with signs and wonders. Silvanus at once ordered him to be brought before him, and himself began to offer sacrifices to Zeus, the chief pagan god. On the following day he sat in the judgment seat together with Cumbricius, and, summoning Thyrsus, first had his earlier interrogation read aloud for all to hear, and then said to the martyr:

"Do not think, Thyrsus, that you will suffer as before. You will endure even more cruel torments if you remain obstinate."

The martyr answered:

"He who gave me strength to bear all my former sufferings, my Lord Jesus Christ, now stands before me, delivering me from your

5. Nicaea was a city in the western part of Bithynia; the 1st and 7th Ecumenical Councils were held there (325 and 787).

6. That is, it was impossible to compel him to offer sacrifice to idols.

hands; for I serve Him alone, and I acknowledge Him alone as God, while I consider your pagan idols and gods to be utter delusion. Nevertheless, if you desire to bring me to offer sacrifice not by compulsion and violence but by prudent counsel, of my own free will, then tell me: to whom, and how, must I offer sacrifice? And when I see the justice of your words, I will gladly submit and will not vainly resist the truth."

Then Silvanus took the saint by the hand and said:

"Let us go into the temple, and there it will be shown to you to whom you must offer sacrifice."

When they came to the temple of Apollo, which stood nearby, Silvanus, pointing his hand at the idol, said:

"Here is the god whom we honor. If you, Thyrsus, pray to him and offer a sacrifice, you will gain for yourself a great protector and obtain favor with the other gods."

The martyr said:

"See what sacrifice I will offer to him, and how I will entreat him."

And when all turned their gaze upon him with attention, he raised his hands and lifted his eyes to heaven, and called upon the unsearchable power of God. Suddenly thunder roared, and the idol of Apollo fell to the ground and crumbled into dust. The holy martyr, turning to those standing near, said:

"Look: your gods are merely the creation of human hands, and cannot even bear the name of the true God."

Silvanus, enraged, said in reply:

"I will utterly destroy and annihilate your sorcery." And at once he ordered that the martyr's body be torn with sharp iron combs down to the bones, so that the saint's flesh fell to the ground in pieces, while the tormentor said:

"Where is your God, your helper, whom you honor and in whom you hope?"

The martyr answered:

"Do you not see the power of Christ working in me, plainly strengthening me against your assaults? How could an earthly and feeble body bear such torments, if divine help were not granted to it from above?"

Then Silvanus ordered a huge cauldron to be brought, filled with water, and a fire kindled beneath it. When the cauldron boiled vigorously, the martyr was bound by the feet with a rope and lowered head first into the boiling water. But the saint called upon the name of Christ, and the cauldron burst apart, the water poured out, and he himself remained unharmed. The tormentor was put to shame and fell into a rage; but since he still had other public affairs to attend to, he ordered the martyr to be led back to prison.

Soon Silvanus, together with Cumvricius, set out for the seaside city of Apamea,[7] ordering the saint, still bound, to be led along behind him. Approaching the city, he halted, and summoning the martyr said:

"Here, Thyrsus, either give a promise to offer sacrifice to the gods and you will remain alive, or you will be deprived of life in a cruel manner."

The saint answered him with the same words he had spoken before, and added at the end:

"Rather let your souls be torn from you."

The tormentors were still more incensed against Thyrsus. They ordered him to be dragged into the city with blows and there thrown into the sea, as they said, for his sorcery, so that he might suffer a painful death and not even be granted the customary burial. But before they had even entered the city, the martyr's prophecy began to be fulfilled: Silvanus suddenly lost his strength, and Cumvricius fell ill with a fever, and on the fourth day both of them ended their lives in a wretched manner. It is said that even the earth would not receive their unclean bodies until the holy martyr prayed about it. And the saint remained in Apamea for twenty-three days, in bonds, until the arrival of a new governor.

A new governor arrived, named Vavda, resembling his predecessors in character and in his malice toward Christians.

Having examined the affairs of the former governors and learning of the martyr Thyrsus, he summoned him for interrogation. The saint proved as unshaken as before in the Christian faith, and again refused

7. Apamea was a city in Bithynia, a quarter of an hour's journey from the southern shore of the Gulf of Cianus, with a harbor.

to submit to the impious pagan demands. Vavda ordered him to be sewn up, bound, in a leather skin and thrown into the sea thirty stadia[8] from the shore. But the skin suddenly burst, the bonds were loosed, and a multitude of radiant men were seen walking upon the sea, who, taking the martyr, brought him safely to dry land. Seeing this, the governor's servants ran to him in fear and told him what had happened. Then he himself went down to the shore, and finding the martyr there, standing alone, said to him:

"Truly, your Christian sorceries and charms are marvelous, if even the sea obeys you, as I see, and if you take away the power of the very laws of nature. But for all that, no sorceries will help you, and they will be only the cause of still more cruel torments and a dreadful death for you."

The martyr answered:

"How long will you remain blinded, and, like your gods, not see though you have eyes? How can anyone by sorcery subjugate to himself the laws of nature? Which of your magicians, or of the gods you honor, in whom all is enchanting delusion and deceit, has ever done so that a man cast into the sea was lifted up by the hands of Angels and, unharmed and whole, walked upon the sea as upon dry land and came out onto the shore?"

The governor ordered the martyr to be seized, bound, led along behind him, and beaten severely with rods, and himself went on to Caesarea. The inhabitants of Caesarea, learning that a new governor was coming to them and bringing with him the holy martyr Thyrsus, all went out of the city as if to meet the governor, but in truth to see the Martyr of Christ, whom everyone wished to see. As soon as all had entered the city, the martyr was at once thrown into prison. The governor long deliberated what kind of execution to subject the martyr to, and at last decided to give him over to be devoured by wild beasts, judging this death to be the most painful. He ordered the fiercest beasts of every kind to be gathered and starved, so that they would rush more eagerly to tear the condemned man apart.

8. A stade was a measure of length equal to approximately 88 sazhen; 30 stades were a little more than 4 versts.

When for thirty days the beasts had been prepared, the tormentor gathered all the people to the temple of Zeus and offered a solemn sacrifice to him. Then he ordered Phirsus, condemned to be devoured by beasts, to be led out of the prison.

Meanwhile, by secret order of the governor, many friends and acquaintances visited the saint in confinement and entreated him to have mercy on himself and to escape a dreadful death by doing what was demanded of him.

"In this way," they said, "you will be delivered from destruction, you will obtain honors, and you will become pleasing to the emperor."

But the saint was, in the words of David, "as a deaf man, I heard not; and as a dumb man, who openeth not his mouth" (Ps. 37:14).

When he was brought before the governor, who at that time was offering sacrifices, the governor said to him:

"We have been far too merciful in giving you so much time to reflect. So if you desire your own good, then now, when you see your whole country offering sacrifice to the great god Zeus, come forward and offer sacrifice as well, that you may escape destruction. But if not, then the claws and teeth of the beasts will tear you apart, and no one will help you or deliver you from calamity."

The martyr pretended to consent and said:

"I have long since resolved to offer sacrifice together with my fellow citizens. But I fear Apollo would be angered if, passing him by, I offered sacrifice to Zeus alone."

Hearing this, the governor rejoiced and said:

"Offer sacrifice to Zeus alone, and I stand surety for you that none of the other gods will be angered with you."

In the sight of all, the martyr approached the idol of Zeus, and when he had silently offered a prayer to the true God, a terrible earthquake occurred, and the idol of Zeus fell to the ground. The pagans fled in fear, and the martyr alone remained in the temple. Filled with rage, the tormentor ordered the saint to be led to be devoured by the beasts.

A great crowd gathered for this spectacle, and when the beasts were let loose upon the saint, it seemed that he stood among the beasts not alone, but with three other persons; and the beasts walked around him

and gently fawned upon him, as if they had long known him. He, raising his hands on high, said:

"I thank Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, that Thou hast glorified Thy Holy Name in me and hast shown Thy mercy upon me, stopping the mouths of the beasts before me, as once before Daniel, Thy servant. Thou, O Master, who both then and now workest wonders, do so that these wild beasts go each to his own dwelling, harming no one of those who are here!"

Then, having prayed, he said to the beasts:

"In the name of the true God, return to the wilderness, each to his own lair from which you were brought, and do no harm to anyone."

And at once the beasts fled, and the doors opened before them of their own accord. All who were present scattered in fear, each where he could, fearing the beasts that had broken loose; the beasts themselves, however, rushed headlong back into the wilderness. At the sight of this miracle, many of the pagans turned to Christ.

Not knowing what to do, Vavda ordered the saint bound again and cast into prison. But some days later, setting out for the city of Apollonia, which lay not far from Caesarea, he commanded that Thyrsus be led there after him. Arriving at Apollonia, Vavda held a public festival there in the temple of Apollo. This temple was filled with idols. Bringing Thyrsus there, Vavda ordered that he be severely beaten with rods before the idols. But the saint, bearing the blows patiently, as if they were inflicted not in reality but in a dream, prayed to God, who dries up the abysses and overturns mountains with a single nod.

"Let Thy hand be upon me, O Lord," he said, "do not withdraw Thy help from me, but look upon me and protect me, that I may not be put to shame, for I have called upon Thee."

When he had prayed in this way, suddenly an earthquake occurred in the city, the governor was struck with illness, the hands of those who were beating the saint grew weak, and many idols fell to the ground and lay there broken into pieces. And Thyrsus, full of joy in God, laughed at the idols and at the tormentor, and said:

"Why do you not help your gods, which lie on the ground in such dishonor and beg you for help, but leave them cast aside before everyone's eyes, a laughingstock to those who are not blinded?"

Although the governor suffered from a grievous illness, his malice remained in full force, and therefore he said:

"The abominable sorceries of Thyrsus make my life heavier than death!"

At this time there was in Apollonia a pagan priest, Callinicus. Seeing from the very beginning the miracles performed by the holy martyr Thyrsus, he began to recognize the powerlessness of his gods. Receiving in his heart the seed of the true faith, he said within himself:

"O God, preached by Thyrsus, who workest wondrous and glorious miracles! Receive me too, as a newly chosen soldier, and strengthen and establish me against those who rise up against Thy truth!"

Thus secretly conversing with God, he came to the governor and with cunning mocked him.

"Most illustrious governor," he said, "that man, enduring cruel torments, has cast down to the earth and destroyed the greatest god Zeus, the sun-bearing Apollo, has already for the third time crushed even Hercules[9], invincible in battle, and overthrown him—not with hands, not with weapons, not with a sword, but by a single word and the invocation of Christ, who suffered the cross and death. Therefore, if it pleases your power, let us restore the god Hercules, who helps some in their troubles, and let us beseech him that, recalling his former courage, he may come and help Zeus the Father and the Divine Apollo, so grievously wronged; for they themselves, it seems to me, are sleeping a deep sleep."

The governor, not understanding the mockery, said:

"Since I am ill, go alone, beseech the gods on our behalf, and rouse them quickly against this sorcerer Thyrsus."

But Callinicus continued:

9. According to the belief of the ancient Greeks, Hercules was one of the Greek heroes, distinguished for extraordinary strength and courage, who performed many feats and became a demigod after his death.

"But I think that the power of God who cast them down is great, and I fear that our gods will not be able to help even themselves."

Then the governor, at last understanding the true meaning of Callinicus's words, said:

"Have you too, Callinicus, been deceived by the magic of this sorcerer?"

Callinicus, unwilling either to continue the conversation he had begun or to conceal his faith any longer, went at once home, cut off the hair of his head and beard, removed the garments of his office, and, bringing all this to the governor, cast it at his feet.

"Take, governor," he said, "my hair and garments, defiled by the stench and smoke of sacrifices, the shedding of blood and the diabolical mysteries; together with them I renounce my former error and begin a new life, for I am now a Christian."

The governor was exceedingly astonished at this unexpected change in Callinicus.

"What has come over you, Callinicus?" he said. "Have the miracles of this sorcerer gained such power over you that even your noble soul, the soul of a servant of the gods who has received many favors from them, has been turned away from the faith of your fathers and drawn into utter perdition?"

Callinicus said:

"The chief cause of my change is Hercules himself, who, having won, as is told of him, so many victories, now could not withstand a single word of this man, and fell in so pitiful a way, showing that the tales which people know about him and the other gods are worthy of laughter."

"Not at all," replied the governor, "but you have been seduced by the magic of Thyrsus and hope that you yourself, by enchantments, will work the same miracles. Yet neither that sorcerer nor you will profit from Christian sorceries, unless you repent and render honor to the gods as before."

Callinicus, wishing to put the governor's folly openly to shame, and firmly hoping that God would be with him, Callinicus, as He was with Thyrsus, said:

"Since you, governor, are now ill, and consider me deceived by sorceries, let us, if it pleases you, turn to the great Asclepius[10] and together pray to him for your recovery; then you will know that I am not deceived by any magic."

The governor, not rightly grasping Callinicus's words, and thinking that the priest was returning again to his gods, at once went with him to the temple. When they had entered, Callinicus began to pray in his soul, saying:

"Lord Jesus Christ, whom I have known as the true God through Thy servant Thyrsus, and whom I have angered beyond number, yet who hast not rejected me! Arise now to help me and show forth in me Thy power!"

While he was thus speaking within himself, a voice from on high was heard, strengthening him and calling him to the struggle. And he, filled with boldness and invoking the name of Christ, began to revile the idol of Asclepius, and at once the idol, as if cast down by a mighty hand, fell at his feet. Then Callinicus, looking at the governor, said to him with mockery:

"You see for yourself that your god cannot rise unless you yourself lift him up. Be convinced, then, that this is not sorcery, but the working of divine power through me."

But the governor, although in his soul he grieved over it and was sorry for Callinicus, nevertheless ordered him cast into prison, and in the morning pronounced the sentence of death upon him and Thyrsus in these words:

"Callinicus, who has fallen away from the service of the gods and from their veneration and has joined the Christian lie, I command to be put to death by the sword; and Thyrsus, who boasts of his miracles and with them has seduced the wretched Callinicus, I command to be placed in a wooden chest and sawn through with a saw."

Callinicus was at once led out to execution by the soldiers. He asked for time to pray, and after a long prayer he was beheaded by the sword. Then, when the tormentors had placed the holy Thyrsus in the chest

10. Asclepius (Aesculapius) was a Greek physician who lived in very ancient times; according to Greek belief, after his death he was numbered among the gods, like Hercules.

and taken a saw to saw him through, the saw became unusually heavy in their hands, so that they could scarcely lift it and move it, while on the wood of the chest it was so light that not even a trace of its teeth remained. For a long time the tormentors labored until they sweated, but achieved nothing; at last the chest suddenly opened, and the saint came out of it with a bright face, and his heart was full of heavenly joy. Those standing around were struck with terror, and no one dared to touch the saint, because of the miracle that had taken place. And a voice from on high was heard, calling the martyr to the heavenly reward. Perceiving that the end of his struggle had come, the saint lifted his hands and his mind to heaven and cried out:

"I thank Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, that Thou receivest me, unworthy as I am, as an heir of Thy blessings, and countest me among those who have pleased Thee. Receive now in peace my soul and bring it into Thy holy dwellings, to the ineffable blessedness bestowed by Thee!"

Then, making the sign of the Cross over himself, Thyrsus committed his holy soul into the hands of God. Thus he who could not be put to death by the many cruel tortures and torments ended his life by a natural death.

After many years, the cruel Diocletian[11] ascended the throne, and once again an imperial decree was sent out everywhere that all should take part in the worship of idols, and that those who refused should be put to death. At that time a certain Arrian was governor in Thebaid[12]. Striving to carry out in every detail the impious command of the cruel emperor, during his stay in the city of Antinoe he seized two noble Christians, Ascalon and Leonidas, and after various tortures put them to death. Then he ordered all the Christians present there to be seized, and, laying out before them the instruments of torture, said:

"Behold, a twofold fate awaits you: offer sacrifices to the gods, and then you will remain unharmed and free; but if you refuse to obey, you will be delivered over to torments and even to death."

No sooner had the governor spoken than thirty-seven men, stepping forward boldly and with one accord, declared their readiness to die

rather than obey the godless command. But after many tortures, one of them, named Apollonius, a church reader, was struck with terror at the sight of the manifold torments; now he trembled at the thought of the sufferings before him, now he feared to lose his soul by falling away from Christ. He began to consider how he might escape both sacrificing to the idols and the cruel tortures, so as to save his soul from the power of the devil and to deliver his body from the hands of the tormentors. While he was wavering in this way, there stood beside him a pagan named Philemon, who served as a musician to the governor.

Noticing him, Apollonius called him over and promised him four gold coins if he would offer the sacrifices in Apollonius's stead, disguised in his garments, so that he should not be recognized. Philemon agreed: he dressed himself in Apollonius's clothing, covered his face, and went up to the altar of sacrifice. But God, who wondrously provides for the salvation of all men, willed to draw Philemon to Himself through Apollonius, and Apollonius through Philemon. And as Philemon, in Apollonius's garments, drew near the idol's altar, the light of the grace of the Lord shone in his heart, and his spiritual eyes were opened to the knowledge of the truth. Crossing himself as a Christian, he stood before the governor. The latter asked those around him:

"Who is this?"

They answered him:

"One of the Christians."

The governor ordered him to offer sacrifice, but he cried out in a loud voice:

"I will not offer it! I am a Christian, a servant of Christ, the Living God."

The governor said:

"Did you not recently see what sufferings Ascalon and Leonidas endured, and by what cruel death they perished?"

Philemon, under the guise of Apollonius, answered:

"The very thing that Ascalon and Leonidas, who recently suffered for Christ, left us as an example of steadfast endurance, this was my in-

11. Roman emperor who reigned from 284 to 305.
12. The Thebaid was a region in the southern part of Egypt.

centive to go fearlessly to torments. To this there also moved me the miracle that took place on your boat, when you wished to cross the river and the boat stopped in the middle of the river, in the deepest part, and could not reach the shore, because you did not wish to name Christ God."[13]

Then the governor ordered the musician Philemon to be summoned, hoping that by his playing of the flute he would charm and soften the spirit of the Christian, easily turn his thoughts in another direction, and incline him to sacrifice to the idols. He did not know, the madman, that standing before him was Philemon himself, and that he was speaking in his own true voice; for previously the governor had heard only his playing on various instruments, and now he heard his distinct speech, inspired in him by the Holy Spirit. Meanwhile Philemon was sought everywhere and not found. They summoned his brother Theon and began to ask where Philemon was. He, recognizing his brother in Apollonius's garments but knowing nothing of what had happened, said:

"Here is Philemon standing before you."

The governor ordered the face of the man standing there to be uncovered, and seeing Philemon, he began to laugh loudly, thinking that Philemon had done this in mockery of the Christians and to amuse those present. Then he ordered Philemon to cast off the borrowed garment and go with him to the altar. But Philemon declared that he was indeed a Christian, and began to laugh at the pagan gods. The judge was extremely astonished at this, and, looking at Philemon, cried out:

"For the welfare of the Roman people, is it true what you are now doing and saying, Philemon, or have you devised this in mockery of the Christians?"

Philemon answered:

"I swear not by Roman welfare, but by my own salvation and by my Master, the King Christ, that I am not mocking the Christians, but declare the real change that has taken place in my heart, and I confess my

13. This miracle is described more fully in the Chet'i-Minei under 20 May, the feast of the holy Martyr Ascalon. The miracle consisted in this: at Ascalon's prayer, the boat carrying the ruler twice came to a halt by God's power, preventing him from crossing the river when he refused to fulfill the saint's demand that he confess the One True God. Only when Arrian wrote this down on paper, though against his will, did the boat move, and the ruler crossed to the other bank.

faith in Christ and affirm that for this confession I am ready to die not once but a thousand times."

These words threw the governor into a rage, and, turning to those around him, he asked them whether Philemon should be put to death at once for publicly reviling the gods, or be given time for reflection and repentance. The people, who loved Philemon for his beautiful flute-playing, begged the governor not to destroy the delight of the whole city. Then the governor said to Philemon:

"Look how the people love you: they call you 'the common delight.' So then, if only out of gratitude for this, do the thing you are accustomed to do: offer sacrifice to the gods, the guardians of the city. Behold, a great festival is at hand, at which you too should give praise to the gods with trumpets and pipes, and thereby gladden yourself and delight our hearing."

"This festival of yours," said Philemon, "brings to my memory the feast celebrated in heaven, and the sound of trumpets stirs in me the desire to hear the Angelic hymns. Know, then, that you labor in vain, seeking to turn me from my confession: by this path you will not only achieve no success, but on the contrary will awaken in my heart an even greater longing for Christ."

The governor said:

"But even if you endure, as you promise, all the torments for Christ, what will you gain by this, when you are not fully a Christian, since you have not received the baptism prescribed by their law?"

Hearing this, Philemon cried out:

"Oh, may the spiritual fire kindled in my heart abide with me! Governor! What thanks I owe you for benefiting me, though against your will, by reminding me of holy Baptism!"

Having said this to the governor, he went out into the midst of the assembly and cried out loudly:

"If among you there is a Christian priest, and if for the sake of the true faith he disdains torments, I beseech him: let him come here quickly and bestow upon me holy Baptism!"

Seeing that all were seized with fear and no one dared to approach him and declare himself a Christian priest, he grieved in his heart, and at last, with hot tears, called out to God:

"My God, Lord Jesus Christ, who mercifully regarded me and called me up out of the depth of error! Do not leave me without holy Baptism, but by whatever means Thou knowest, send me a priest and water, that I may be baptized as the other Christians are!"

Immediately after his prayer, a cloud descended from above and, encircling him three times, sprinkled him with rain, signifying thereby over him holy Baptism, and then rose up again. All were amazed; but the governor, blinded by malice, said that this was sorcery and a deception of the eyes.

Then the saint prayed that all his pipes and trumpets, which he had given to Apollonius at the time when the two of them exchanged garments, should be burned, so that no memory of his vain art would remain, and no pagan could ever say:

"Here are the trumpets of Philemon."

And indeed, fire that came down from heaven kindled and destroyed them all before Apollonius's eyes.

Meanwhile the hour of suffering was drawing near for Apollonius himself, for Philemon's brother Theon, coming before the governor, related in detail how Apollonius had clothed Philemon in his own garment, and, causing him to go in his place to the contest of confession, had become the author of his destruction. Apollonius was brought in at once, and the governor Arrian, looking at him with great wrath and menace, said:

"What is this, most worthless of men? What have you done to us, to the whole city, and to this wretched man? You, despising the gods and the laws out of pride, and out of cowardice shrinking from tortures, exchanged garments with him and by some sorcery perverted his heart and deprived the whole city of its great delight. If you feared torments, you should have come to me and opened your soul to me, and I, by the law of humanity, would have forgiven you everything and let you live in freedom and without care."

To these words of the governor, Apollonius answered:

"You do well and rightly to reproach and revile me, and I will say nothing against this: I myself consider myself guilty—not because I became the cause of so great a good for Philemon, but because I did not first obtain these blessings for myself; not because he appeared in my garment, but because I myself hid beneath his garment. But since, by the will of God, we have both been clothed in the robe of salvation,[14] know for certain that neither Philemon nor Apollonius will ever offer sacrifice to your gods; and if I feared torments before, now, with the help of my God, I shall show the greater courage."

Angered by these words, the tormentor ordered Apollonius to be bound and left in this condition for more cruel torments, and meanwhile commanded three soldiers to strike Philemon on the face and eyes. The people, seeing Philemon being beaten, grew indignant and cried out to the soldiers to stop. After that the governor said to Philemon:

"Spare yourself, Philemon, or at least spare the people, who are tormented in their hearts because of you. You should consider that if the people are so outraged at seeing this small torment of yours, what will happen when you are subjected to still greater torments? Offer sacrifice, Philemon, and reward yourself for the present suffering with the pleasures that will follow, for we shall feast in the temple of Serapis[15] and abandon ourselves to every kind of delight."

"A banquet is prepared for me in heaven," Philemon answered, and then, turning to the people, said:

"Why do you grieve, seeing how they beat me? Did not the ruler's attendants beat us when I was still among you as a flute-player? Sometimes they did worse things to us, and you laughed aloud; why, then, do you not make merry now? But know that while you grieve, the Angels rejoice over me, seeing me a Christian and a worshipper of the true faith."

Seeing that Philemon remained steadfast, the torturer ordered that his and Apollonius's shins be pierced, that they be bound with ropes, and that the Martyrs be dragged throughout the city. Then Philemon

14. That is, both had already been baptized—one in the usual manner and the other by a miracle.
15. Serapis was a pagan deity of ancient Egypt, revered as the god of departed souls and invoked as a savior from sickness and death; for this reason many identified him with Asclepius.

was hung upon an olive tree, and arrows were shot at him, but they did not touch him; one arrow instead rebounded toward the ruler and put out his right eye. Having lost his eye and feeling the most grievous pain, he uttered many blasphemies and spoke evil against Christ and the Christians; at last, however, being driven by the pain, he ordered the Martyr to be untied and begged him to heal his eye. But the saint replied:

"I will not heal you now, lest you should think of ascribing the benefit you have received to sorcery. But when I am parted from the body—for my end is near—you shall come to my tomb, take earth from it and apply it to your eye, and call upon the name of Christ; and it shall be healed at once."

After this, by order of the ruler, the heads of both Martyrs, Philemon and Apollonius, were cut off, and their honored bodies were laid near those of the holy Martyrs Ascalon and Leonidas. The torturer, whose eye was in unbearable pain, came, though against his will, to the tomb of the saints; taking earth from it, in accordance with Philemon's words, he applied it to his ailing eye and said:

"In Thy name, Jesus Christ, for Whose sake these Martyrs willingly went to their death, I lay this earth upon my eye; and if I am healed and can see, I too will confess that there is no other God but Thee."

As soon as he had said this, he received a twofold healing at once, of his eye and of his soul: with his eye he saw the sun, and with his soul he beheld the Truth, brighter than the sun; and he went forth, joyfully crying aloud:

"I am a Christian!"

He confessed this before many witnesses and received holy Baptism with all his household; and he released in peace thirty-six Christians who had been held in bonds for Christ's sake. Then, taking shrouds[16] and precious spices[17], he came with a great multitude and two bishops to the tomb of the holy Martyrs and buried them with honor.

16. A shroud is a large linen cloth in which the body of the deceased was wrapped.

17. In the East, the body of the deceased was anointed with fragrant oils, as Joseph and Nicodemus did, for example, with the Most Pure Body of the Lord.

Meanwhile, the report that Arrian had become a Christian from a pagan and would no longer offer sacrifice to the gods reached Diocletian. The emperor sent four arms-bearers[18] to Caesarea, commanding them to bring Arrian to him, for he wished to ascertain for himself whether what was said of him was true. The arms-bearers took Arrian and urged him to set out on the journey without delay. But he begged them to allow him to visit the tomb of the holy Martyrs; and since they would not consent, he gave them eighty gold coins, and at last they let him go to the tomb. When he arrived there, he fell prostrate and entreated the holy Martyrs to help him in his contest. And behold, from the tomb came the voice of Philemon, saying:

"Take courage, Arrian, and fear not, for the Lord Himself is calling you to Himself, leading you to the contest, and preparing for you a martyr's crown; and those who will share in your contest and its reward shall be the very four arms-bearers who came to take you."

Hearing this voice, Arrian was filled with awe. Returning home, inspired by the grace of the Lord, he foretold to his household the time and manner of his martyrdom. He summoned his servants and said to them:

"You shall go with us as far as Alexandria; then I shall be brought before the emperor and, with God's help, I shall complete my contest. On the eighth day of the month of Phamenoth[19] I shall be sewn into a sack and cast into the sea. On the eleventh day of the same month, at the sixth hour, go down to the shore: there you will find my body, brought to land by dolphins. Take it and lay it with the other Martyrs."

Then Arrian set out on his way with the arms-bearers, and when he arrived before the emperor, he was at first received kindly. But soon after his arrival, a bath was prepared for the emperor; before its entrance stood a statue of Apollo, and as the emperor went there, he took Arrian with him. After bathing, as he came out of the bath and approached the statue, the emperor said to Arrian:

"Offer sacrifice to the great god Apollo, and let us go with cheerful hearts to supper."

18. A protector was an arms-bearer.
19. Phamenoth corresponded to our month of March.

Arrian answered him:

"How can I do this after the many great wonders wrought by Christ, the true God—wonders that are no fables, but the undoubted truth? My own eyes are their witnesses; how, then, can I offer sacrifice to a lifeless and senseless idol?"

The enraged emperor immediately ordered that Arrian's hands be bound with iron chains, that great stones be fastened to his feet, and that he be cast into a deep pit; then, having it filled with earth and stones, he ordered the mound to be leveled with the ground. He commanded that his throne be set atop the covered pit, sat upon it, and ordered the soldiers to play trumpets around him, saying:

"Let us see whether his Christ will come and deliver him from this pit."

Then he went to the palace and entered his bedchamber. There he saw the iron and stones that had been bound upon Arrian hanging above his bed, and Arrian himself lying on the bed.

At this sight, the emperor was filled with terror and confusion, and thought that one of his own people had betrayed him and was plotting secretly against him. But St. Arrian said to him:

"Be not troubled: no one has betrayed you or risen against you; but I am truly Arrian, whom you cast into the pit, saying, 'Let us see whether his Christ will come and deliver him.' And behold, Christ has delivered me and commanded me to lie upon your bed."

Diocletian stood for a long while in amazement and silence, and at last, scarcely coming to himself, cried aloud in fear and confusion:

"O wicked sorcery! No one has ever seen anything like this!"

He said and shouted many other things, and at last ordered that the saint be sewn into a sack with sand and cast into the sea in a deep place. Meanwhile, the four aforementioned arms-bearers, the eldest of whom was Ephotich, appeared before the emperor and declared themselves to be Christians. They too were sewn into sacks with sand and cast into the sea together with Arrian; the dolphins[20] received their bodies and carried them to the shore near Alexandria, where Arrian's

20. Dolphins are marine mammals.

servants were waiting for them, according to his testament. They took from the water the bodies of their master and the four arms-bearers and buried them all together with honor,[21] glorifying God—the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit—to Whom be glory from us also, unto the ages. Amen.

Kontakion, Tone 2:

Champions of the faith of piety, ye spat upon the impious ruler and rebuked his beastlike bloodshed; strengthened by the help of Christ, ye overcame his furious opposition, Thyrsus and Leucius. Pray with those who suffered for us.

* * *

21. The holy Martyrs suffered around 287. Outside the walls of Constantinople, around 397, Flavius Caesarius built a magnificent church to Thyrsus, in which his relics were kept. Later, he appeared in a vision to Empress Pulcheria, commanding her to place beside his relics those of the 40 holy Martyrs of Sebaste (their feast is 9 March), who had been hidden in the earth and were uncovered in 450 at his direction. Another church was built for him by Emperor Justinian the Great, near what was called the Market of Theodosius.

THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 15

15 декабря

New Calendar December 15 · Old Calendar December 28 (civil dates)

Passion of the Holy Hieromartyr Eleutherius and of His Mother Anthia

Страдание святого священномученика Елевферия и матери его Анфии

In the reign of Aelius Hadrian,[1] a zealous servant of idols, there shone forth, like a bright star, the wondrous Eleutherius. He was born in Rome to noble and wealthy parents. The father of St. Eleutherius was thrice appointed military commander, but his mother was judged worthy of still greater honor and glory, for, enlightened by the holy Apostle Paul, she received baptism from him and was named Anthia. She named her son Eleutherius and began to raise him in strict piety; and when he came of age, she, by the hands of Pope Anacletus of Rome,[2] dedicated him to God as a gift truly worthy of the Lord. The archbishop, seeing that Eleutherius was a youth of good conduct, received him into his clergy, and when he had reached fifteen years, ordained him deacon, and then in his eighteenth year ordained him priest; and when the saint had reached twenty years, Archbishop Nicetas appointed him bishop of Illyricum.[3] Here the holy bishop shone like a lamp on a lampstand and gave light by the word of God, leading many to the knowledge of the one Lord. But the hater, the devil, could not endure this, and rose up against the saint in fury with his murderous malice.

1. Hadrian: Roman emperor, reigned A.D. 117–138. Although he did not raise a particular, prolonged persecution against the Christians, he was a zealous servant of pagan impiety, and in his time many Christian martyrs suffered.
2. St. Anacletus: Pope of Rome from 79 to 91.
3. Illyricum or Illyria embraced the whole eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea with the regions lying behind it (present-day Dalmatia, Bosnia and Albania).

He prompted the wicked emperor Hadrian to rise up against the truth and begin to persecute the Christians, and first of all to kill Eleutherius; he also wished to destroy all the best teachers of piety, as the finest fruits of the glory of Christ. And so the emperor sent with a threatening message a certain voivode, Felix, to bring Eleutherius by force to the imperial court. Felix, arriving in Illyricum, seized the moment when the good shepherd was feeding his flock with an instructive word in the house of the Lord, and, surrounding the church with soldiers, burst into the interior of the temple, breathing fury and glancing about malevolently. But seeing Eleutherius pouring forth a stream of pure teaching and instructing his hearers with sweet speech, he stood still and himself began to listen attentively and to marvel at the power of Christ preached by him; and at once, exchanging his fury for meekness, his field of heart being made capable of receiving the seed of the word of God, he became as a lamb and from a persecutor became a disciple of Christ; as if forgetting all that was before, he from a brigand became a good and faithful servant of Christ. Disdaining the imperial command, he fell at the feet of the holy bishop, and from then on did not leave his teacher, being enlightened by his preaching and being established in piety.

Thus Felix was turned from pagan impiety to piety, and no longer thought of returning to him who had sent him. The holy Eleutherius, desiring to suffer for the holy faith of Christ, hastened on his way. Felix went with him too, but no longer as a voivode leading a prisoner, but he followed the saint as a lamb follows its shepherd. When on the way they came to a spring, Felix became as a second eunuch of Candace and, as that one from the Apostle Philip (Acts 8:30–39), received baptism from the divine Eleutherius and put off the darkness of idol-worship, as a certain rotten garment.

Then Felix together with Eleutherius set out on the journey.

When they came to Rome, the Christians learned that Felix had joined the Church of Christ; and he told them everything about Eleutherius. And so Eleutherius, by the emperor's command, stood before the tribunal. He came here courageously and fearlessly, summoned as if not to judgment but to a feast. The emperor, looking at him, saw

that he was still a youth, comely and endowed with all natural gifts, and said to him:

"Eleutherius, you, having abandoned the faith of your fathers and having held the worship of our gods as nothing, worship some new God, who not only died in the sight of all, but died the most cruel death."

Eleutherius would make no answer to these words, imitating Christ, who in His sufferings said nothing before Pilate and answered nothing to Herod. Then the emperor spoke again:

"Answer then, why have you become so mad as to join the mad Christian faith? Repent before me and offer sacrifice to our invincible gods. If you obey me and do this, I shall honor you with great honor; but if you do not, I shall condemn you to grievous torments."

Eleutherius, however, called upon the Lord, who said: "Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand what you shall answer, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries shall be able to resist" (Mt. 10:19; 21:15), and answered:

"How can I serve such gods, or agree with those who serve them? Would it not be better for me to advise you to withdraw from them? But since you do not wish to hear me, one must weep over your madness, for you, though endowed by God with reason, have become worse than trees and stones, because you have come to count them your gods, forsaking the true God, who by His wisdom created the whole universe: for heaven and earth are the work of His hands, and we, among all that He created, are the best and noblest creatures. Yet we go astray in ignorance, walking as it were in the night, and, not knowing what is pleasing or displeasing to the Lord, we wage war against Him. And those who are truly our enemies and adversaries—I speak of the devils—what madness it is to count them your masters and gods and to offer them honors and sacrifices! But I have cleaved to my Lord and shall always be faithful to Him and shall serve my Christ; as for all that is yours, whether honors or dishonors and torments, I count it a child's game or a child's threat. For me, as my teacher, St. Paul, says, 'the world is crucified to me, and I to the world' (Gal. 6:14), and to die for Christ is for me delight and blessedness."

Then the emperor, filled with wrath, ordered a bronze bed to be brought and many hot coals to be put under it, and the naked martyr to be laid on the bed itself, and the fire to be kept up until he perished. When the bed was prepared, the martyr himself lay down on it with his whole body. The people gathered at this spectacle began to reproach the torturers for these tortures and said:

"Why does this honorable, noble man, known for his wisdom, perish so cruelly, like some criminal?"

But God from on high lightened the sufferings of the martyr, who rejoiced, as if cooled by dew and as if resting on blooming roses. Then the emperor, somewhat restraining his fury, commanded the martyr's body to be taken from the bed, thinking that he was already dead. But the martyr rose from the bed alive and well, in no way harmed by the fire; joyful and exulting, he sang: "I will extol Thee, my God, my King, and bless Thy name for ever and ever... One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts" (Ps. 144:1, 4).

Thus having glorified God, Eleutherius stood even more boldly before the tormentor and said:

"O emperor, look upon me, whom you thought consumed by fire, and know Christ God, whom I preach; know too the weakness of your gods."

The emperor, counting these bold and free words of the martyr as a dishonor to himself, and considering himself defeated, began to devise still greater torments. And so again an iron grate was brought out into the midst; under it a fire was lit, and oil was poured over it from above, so that it was in a strong flame. But as soon as the martyr was laid on this grate, the fire immediately went out, the coals cooled, and the iron grate became cold, as if it had been doused not with oil but with water, and thus preserved the martyr whole. But what then? Did the emperor's fury go out with this? Not at all. Seized by cruel rage, he did not become any better: like a blind man, he had only one aim, to please his gods, who were in essence demons and murderers of men, by the torment of the saint.

Then the emperor ordered a pan to be brought, wax, pitch and tallow to be melted in it, and set it on a strong fire, so as to lay the saint on it again. When all this was done, and the pan was heated and the wax boiled, the martyr stood upon it, intending to endure all these torments. But the emperor said to him:

"Eleutherius, standing between death and life, make haste to choose what is profitable for yourself. For I take great care that you should not perish by a cruel death, and I love you as my own son. I do not wish either, I swear it by the gods, that a man so noble, so well-mannered, eloquent and fair should senselessly destroy himself, and for no other reason than a proud, vain and useless obstinacy."

The martyr, standing before the emperor, began to speak to him with boldness; answering his cunning flattery, he reviled him, calling him a wolf attacking the sheep of Christ. And he added:

"Whatever you do, you will not persuade me to abandon my pious life."

Then Hadrian, falling into a rage, left off words and proceeded to action. He again ordered him to be laid on the pan. When this was done, the same thing happened as before: the fire turned into dew, and a cool wind began to cool the holy martyr. Hadrian, seeing that everything was being done against his will, did not know what to undertake and, sitting, began to ponder. At this time there was here the city prefect, by name Coriv; this was a man chosen of God: he was already in some measure acquainted with the Christian teaching, knew how the voivode Felix had become a Christian, and in general, as it were a certain seed, had already received in his heart the first beginnings of the Christian faith, but, still following pagan impiety, greatly abetted the emperor.

Seeing the emperor greatly perplexed and not knowing what to do with the martyr, he advised him to command that a copper furnace, studded with sharp iron spikes, be heated, and Eleutherius cast into it. When the furnace had been made red-hot, the martyr lifted his bodily and spiritual eyes on high, fixing all his mind upon heaven; and, filled with ineffable joy, he spoke:

"I thank Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, my God, that Thou hast vouchsafed me such great blessings, girding me with Thy strength and strengthening me for these sufferings for Thy holy name. And now look down from heaven and see how those who hate me take counsel against me, and deliver my soul from their plots and from men of blood[4], for Thou art good; preserve me, that all may know Thee, the one God, throughout all the ends of the universe."

Then, like the holy Protomartyr Stephen, who prayed for those who stoned him, Eleutherius began thus to pray for his tormentors:

"O most merciful Master: touch their hearts, grant them to know Thy holy name, and may they know Thee, the one true God, and forsake their destructive worship of idols; for Thou art blessed for ever. Amen."

While the martyr thus prayed, Coriv listened attentively to the words of his prayer, and at once, through these pious words, as though from burning coals, his heart was kindled and he was wholly changed. He approached the emperor and said:

"Why is Eleutherius being subjected innocently to such torments, as though for some crime? And for what fault is he being condemned to so cruel a death?"

Hearing these unexpected words from Coriv, the emperor was troubled in heart and, glaring fiercely at him, said:

"Are you the Coriv known to us all? What has come over you? Have you been beguiled by the gold taken from his mother, that you have changed so unexpectedly? Are my gifts, wealth, glory, honors, and estates not enough for you—the things that have made you renowned throughout all Rome? Or do you desire more from me? You may have it. Behold, all my treasures lie open before you: take with both hands as much as you wish, but do not let a woman secretly bribe you with a paltry sum of gold."

But Coriv, inspired by his good purpose and enlightened by the martyr's prayer, cried out:

"May your gold be your ruin, for from it the everlasting fire shall be kindled! Why do you willfully blind yourself so, and seek to shake that

which cannot be shaken? You know well that none of your gods can save those standing here from the fire, but the God whom Eleutherius worships has made him stronger than fire and mightier than every other torment."

Hearing these words, the tormentor burned with indescribable rage (for great friendship sometimes begets great hatred). He ordered that very night that the eparch be cast into the same furnace which he had advised should be prepared for Eleutherius. When Coriv was already beside the furnace, he cried out to the martyr Eleutherius:

"Pray for me, and arm me with the same weapon of Christ with which you armed the voivode Felix."

Then, having been marked with the blessing of the Cross by the martyr, he was cast into the furnace, but remained unharmed within it, and after an hour came forth, glorifying God. At last, Hadrian, overcome by his fury, ordered Coriv's head to be cut off; thus he received his martyr's death and in a short time acquired the treasure so greatly desired by many.

That same night Eleutherius, too, was cast into the furnace, and they began to drag him over its sharp iron spikes. But the fire, as before, went out, the furnace cooled, and the iron points broke, as though paying honor to the martyr's body. All this, exposing the tormentor's blindness of soul, drew those standing nearby to knowledge of the Lord, who wrought such glorious miracles.

Then all who stood there cried out:

"Great is the God of the Christians, whom Eleutherius proclaims!"

Again the tormentor was greatly perplexed as to what to do, and ordered the martyr to be taken to prison. He himself gathered his counselors and spent the whole day deliberating how he might destroy Eleutherius. The holy martyr Eleutherius languished in prison from hunger; but He who once fed Daniel through Habakkuk and Elijah through a raven (Dan. 14:37; 3 Kgdms. 17:6)—He did not allow Eleutherius to die of hunger either. The Lord fed him with Angelic food, sending it into the prison by means of a dove. At last, the tor-

4. "Men of blood": expressions of the Psalmist (Ps. 5:7, 54:54; 58:3, etc.), denoting bloodthirsty and fierce people.

mentor ordered wild oxen to be brought and the martyr tied to them, so that he might be dragged and torn by them and thus put to death.

While all this was taking place, an Angel of the Lord came down from heaven, unbound the saint from the oxen, and snatched him from the hands of his tormentors, bringing him to a mountain not far from the city. It was a deserted place, inhabited by many wild beasts. But the holy martyr Eleutherius, praising the Lord, lived among them as though among sheep: lions passed by him, and even bears fawned upon him. As though they knew his voice, they followed him everywhere like servants after their master, serving and guarding him. After some time, hunters learned of the saint, and word of it reached Adrian as well. Then he sent soldiers to seize Eleutherius. When the soldiers found the saint, the beasts rushed at them as though at enemies of their master, and nearly tore them to pieces; but Eleutherius forbade them and ordered them to withdraw into the wilderness. He himself went gladly with the soldiers to his execution, as though to a feast to which he had been invited, speaking with them of the Kingdom of God and the fiery Gehenna prepared for idol-worshippers.

On the way, Eleutherius enlightened them with the teaching of Christ and baptized them, and with them others also—up to five hundred who had believed. Upon arriving in Rome, he was condemned to be devoured by wild beasts. When the saint was brought to the place of execution, first a lioness and then a lion were let loose upon him; but they were as gentle as sheep and began to lick his feet. How could they have harmed him, when by God's command so many wild beasts had served him in the wilderness as their master? Seeing this, all the people cried out:

"Great is the God of Eleutherius!"

Others reviled the holy martyr, calling him a sorcerer and magician, but God's punishment suddenly overtook them: some of these blasphemers were struck dumb. The tormentor, not knowing what else to do, ordered the saint's head to be cut off with a sword. When this had been done, Eleutherius' mother Anthia, who had watched her son's contest all that time with joy, embraced his dead body and began to kiss it. Rejoicing and thanking God that the blood received from her

had been poured out for Christ, she herself was also beheaded with a sword and fell dead upon her son's body. The faithful from Illyricum who were there, together with the Romans, took the holy bodies of these servants of God and buried them with honor, glorifying the Lord, to whom be glory for ever[5]. Amen.

Kontakion of the Hieromartyr, Tone 2:

As the adornment of priests, O venerable one, and the herald of the Passion-bearers, we all praise thee, and we beseech thee, O Hieromartyr Eleutherius: deliver from manifold afflictions those who celebrate thy memory with love, praying unceasingly for us all.

* * *

Life of St. Stephen the Confessor, Archbishop of Sourozh

Житие святого Стефана Исповедника, архиепископа Сурожского

Our Venerable Father Stephen was born in Great Cappadocia, of Christian parents who brought him up in good discipline. From childhood he was distinguished by his good conduct, keeping away from the customary games of children. When he was seven years old, his parents sent him to learn to read and write; he proved apt in his studies, and in a short time became well versed in Holy Scripture. When he reached the age of fifteen, he left his homeland and came to Constantinople, wishing to complete his education there. This was in the reign of Emperor Theodosius Adramyttenus[6] and St. Patriarch Germanus. There St. Stephen continued his diligent studies, and having mastered the philosophical sciences, surpassed many in wisdom—

5. Saint Eleutherius the Hieromartyr and his mother Anthia suffered about A.D. 120. The relics of Hieromartyr Eleutherius are at present in Rome, in the church of the Martyr Susanna. At the end of the fourth century, under the emperor Arcadius, a church in his name was built in Constantinople near Xerolophos (by Basil the Patrician). St. Joseph the Hymnographer composed a canon in honor of the holy martyr, in the eighth ode of which it is said that his reliquary pours forth rivers of healings and miracles.

6. Theodosius III Adramyttenus: Byzantine emperor from 715 to 716.

even the teachers themselves—so that all wondered at his great learning.

Hearing of Stephen, St. Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople, summoned him and, blessing him, asked what country he came from. Stephen told him all about himself. Loving his good conduct, wisdom, and humility, the patriarch kept Stephen in his household. The blessed Stephen lived with the patriarch for several years, serving the holy Church and living in temperance and a clear conscience. Then, unknown to all, he left Constantinople and came to a certain monastery, where he received the monastic tonsure and labored in virtue. Later, desiring a life of greater stillness, he withdrew from the monastery and, finding a solitary place unknown to anyone, lived there for a considerable time, serving God with fasting and prayers.

At that time the bishop who was in the city of Sourozh[7] reposed. And so the inhabitants of Sourozh came to Constantinople to the most holy Patriarch Germanus, asking him to appoint a bishop for Sourozh. When deliberations were held concerning the appointment of a bishop, disagreement arose, for some wanted one man and others another. The people of Sourozh asked the emperor and the most holy patriarch to give them a bishop who could govern the church well. "For," they said, "heresies have multiplied in our city."

Once, while St. Germanus was standing at prayer during the night, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him and said:

"Tomorrow send someone to that deserted place where Stephen, God's chosen one, lives; appoint him bishop for Sourozh, for he is able to shepherd Christ's flock well and bring the heretics to the true faith. I, too, have been sent to him by God, with the command that he disobey you in nothing."

"O master," said the patriarch, "how shall I know the place where Stephen, God's chosen one, lives?"

Then the Angel took one of the patriarch's servants and showed him where the saint dwelt; and the servant, returning, told the patriarch of it.

7. Surozh, or Sugdaea: an ancient Greek city on the southern shore of the Crimea, now Sudak, a settlement in the Tauride Province.

To St. Stephen, who at that time was praying to God in his hidden place, there appeared the same Angel of the Lord in white raiment; and St. Stephen was afraid and, trembling with fear, fell to the ground.

Taking the saint by the hand, the Angel reassured him, saying:

"I am the Angel of the Lord, and I have been sent by Christ the Savior to bring you joyful tidings and to command you to go to the city of Sourozh, that you may teach the people the Christian faith. Tomorrow the Patriarch will summon you, and having consecrated you, will send you there as archbishop. Do not disobey him, lest you anger God."

Then, bestowing peace upon him, the Angel ascended into heaven.

On the following day the Patriarch sent a servant with two presbyters to fetch St. Stephen, and they brought him with great honor to the Patriarch.

The Patriarch received St. Stephen with joy, and having consecrated him, appointed him Archbishop of Sourozh and sent him by ship to the eparchy entrusted to him.

Arriving in the city of Sourozh and ascending the archiepiscopal throne, St. Stephen began to teach the people from Divine Scripture, and over the course of five years he baptized the whole city of Sourozh and all its surroundings.

At that time Leo the Isaurian ascended the throne in Constantinople and raised up iconoclasm[8], having been instructed in this by two Jews. At first he commanded that the holy icons be placed high, saying:

"Let whoever is pure kiss them."

Afterwards he commanded that the icons be lifted into the air, explaining that icons should not be nailed to the wall. And the wretch undertook many other measures against the veneration of the holy icons. The holy Patriarch Germanus admonished him much, urging him to abandon his evil undertaking and discussing the matter on the basis of the sacred books[9]. Enraged at these admonitions, the iconoclast openly

8. The Byzantine emperor Leo, whose family came from the Asia Minor region of Isauria, reigned from 717 to 741. He came out against the veneration of icons especially in 726. This provoked a popular uprising against him.

9. At this, Patriarch Germanus refused to sign the emperor's orders against the veneration of icons, saying that he could not introduce anything new in matters of faith without an Ecumenical Council.

revealed the poison which until then he had hidden in his heart, and vigorously began to cast out the holy icons, to revile and dishonor them.

Then Leo sent decrees throughout the whole city and to many surrounding places, that the holy icons be treated in the same way, and he said:

"If anyone opposes me, I will torment him with various torments and deliver him to death."

In the imperial city one could then see the various sufferings of Orthodox Christians. The impious emperor sent Patriarch Germanus into confinement, and in his place appointed as patriarch Anastasius, a Syrian by birth, who shared his heresy.

Then the emperor and the patriarch sent their envoys to St. Stephen, Archbishop of Sourozh, with the wicked command not to venerate icons or the cross. St. Stephen answered the envoys:

"Let it not be so; I will not permit my people to depart from the law of Christ. I do not heed the command of either the emperor or the wretched patriarch."

At night he came to the envoys on their ship and sailed with them to Constantinople.

Vested in the garments of his episcopal rank, St. Stephen presented himself before the emperor. The emperor asked him:

"Who are you?"

The saint answered:

"I am Stephen, Archbishop of Sourozh."

And the emperor said:

"Do you see this assembly sitting with me in great honor? They have burned and hacked the icons. Listen to me, and you too will be in as great honor with us."

St. Stephen answered:

"Let it not be so. Even if you burn me, or cut me into pieces, or torment me with any other torments, I am ready to endure everything for the icons and for the Cross of the Lord."

Then the saint said to the emperor:

"We have found in the books a certain prophecy, that in Constantinople there will appear an impious emperor, an iconoclast, who burns the holy icons. But may God not bring this about in your reign!"

"And did you find the name of that emperor?" asked the emperor.

"His name is Konop," answered Stephen. And the emperor said:

"Rightly, Stephen, you have found my name, for my father and mother named me Konop."

And Stephen said:

"O tsar! May this not come to pass in your reign. But if you bring it about, you will be the forerunner of the Antichrist!"

Hearing these words from the saint, the wretched tsar struck his face, lips and teeth with an iron glove, crying out:

"How dared you call me the forerunner of the Antichrist?"

And the tsar commanded that Stephen be seized by the hair and beard, beaten, dragged along the ground and cast into prison. Dragged by his tormentors, the saint offered thanks to God, and he was cast into prison, where other hierarchs were also held. Then the tsar again commanded that Stephen be brought before him.

"How did the Bishop of Sourozh dare to call me so!" he said. "Drag him here with blows."

The saint stood before the tsar with seven bishops. Holding in his hands an icon of the Lord, the Theotokos and John the Forerunner, the tsar said to the saint:

"Why did you call me the forerunner of the Antichrist?"

The saint answered:

"Because you do his works. I have already said this, and I say the same to you again."

Then the tsar spat upon the icon, began to trample it, and said to Stephen:

"Do the same yourself with this icon."

But the saint, shedding tears, said:

"Enemy of God, unworthy of the kingdom! How have your mad eyes not been blinded, and your lawless hands not withered? May God soon take away your kingdom and bring your life to an end."

Hearing this, the emperor in his anger commanded that St. Stephen be beaten. Then they tied him to the tail of a horse and dragged him to prison; but the saint gave thanks to God. All who were imprisoned in the dungeon prayed to God, and by the prayers of the saints the impious emperor soon died, and his son Constantine Kopronymos came to the throne. His wife, hearing of the virtues and miracles of St. Stephen, asked her husband, Emperor Constantine, to release the saint to his see. At that time a son was born to the emperor, and St. Stephen baptized him. Rewarding Stephen with gifts, the emperor sent him with great honor back to his flock. The good shepherd once again received his throne, and for a long time he tended well the flock of Christ entrusted to him. Then, foreseeing his departure to God, he appointed as Archbishop of Sourozh in his place his clergyman Philaret, and he reposed in God to eternal life, on the 15th day of the month of December[10].

In Sourozh there was a man named Ephraim, blind from his mother's womb, whom St. Stephen had helped with food, drink and clothing. Hearing of the death of his benefactor, he wept, saying:

"Who will now care for me? Lead me, that I may kiss his holy feet."

And when he was brought to the body of the reposed St. Stephen, he fell at his feet with weeping and sobbing, and immediately he received his sight. By this miracle God made known His servant, that he was numbered with the saints in the choir of wonderworkers and confessors. His holy body was then honorably committed to burial by the hierarchs and the whole people of Sourozh with many tears, to the glory of God, who is glorified and exalted by all, forever. Amen.

Troparion, Tone 4:

Since thou wert a hierarch and wast united with the incorporeal Powers, O Hieromartyr Stephen, thou didst take up the Cross as a weapon, and standing firm against the reviler of icons and the opponents of the Spirit, who venerate not the most pure image of Christ our God, thou didst cut off every wicked heresy. Wherefore,

10. St. Stephen died about the middle of the eighth century.

having received the crown of martyrdom, thou didst deliver thy city of Sourozh from all hostility. Now we beseech thee, O Saint, that thou deliver us from all evil temptations, and from sorrows, and from eternal torment.

Kontakion, Tone 3:

Strengthened by the power of the Most High, O sacred Stephen, thou didst overthrow the wavering of the imperial iconoclasm. Today Sourozh and we the faithful have before us the glory and riches of thy holy relics, which the orders of Angels bring down from on high, and with songs and hymns they glorify thee, O great and holy Stephen.

* * *

Commemoration of the Venerable Paul of Latros

Память преподобного Павла Латрского

The Venerable Paul of Latros was of noble parents from the city of Elaea[11]. Having lost his father at an early age, he was brought up in the monastery of St. Stephen in Phrygia[12]. Then, having buried his mother after a short time, while still a youth he devoted himself wholly to the service of God in a monastery situated on Mount Latros, not far from Miletus. Mortifying his flesh, the holy ascetic never lay down on a bed or a mat, but leaned against a tree or a stone and gave himself to brief sleep. Often, to overcome sleep, he would hang two large stones on his back and walk around the monastery until Matins, or, withdrawing to the bank of a nearby stream, would give himself under the shade of a tree to tearful prayer and contemplation of God. Not content with these labors, in order to give himself wholly to Christ, the Venerable Paul withdrew into solitude in a cave; then he went up a high mountain and settled there. A shepherd, who chanced upon the Venerable in his solitude, brought him food. Advancing in spiritual perfec-

11. Eleae: a city in Mysia, the northwestern region of Asia Minor, near Pergamum.
12. Phrygia: a large region of Asia Minor, originally embracing the whole middle part of the western half of the peninsula, and also, later, the southern shore of the Propontis (Sea of Marmara) up to the Hellespont (Dardanelles), which was later reckoned to Mysia.

tion, Paul acquired from God the gift of discerning the invisible world, and he worked miracles. The fame of the wondrous labors and holy life of the Venerable drew many ascetics to him, who, settling at the foot of the rock, established a monastery. The Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus[13] often wrote to him, asking for his prayers and counsel; Peter, Tsar of Bulgaria, and the Pope of Rome[14] honored him for his God-pleasing life. Burdened by the fact that his solitude was disturbed by numerous visitors, the Venerable Paul twice withdrew to the island of Samos[15], where he founded a lavra and restored three monasteries which had been destroyed by the Agarenes. On his second return to Latros, he foretold the hour of his death. Then he came down from the mountain, and having blessed the brethren, he peacefully yielded up his spirit to the Lord[16].

Troparion, Tone 4:

As a fellow-dweller with the incorporeal, and a companion of all the venerable ones, O all-glorious Paul, we sing thy praises and beseech thee: intercede always for us, that we may obtain mercy.

Kontakion, Tone 8:

From thy youth, O wise one, thou didst desire with manly zeal what is above the mind, and thou didst forsake the turmoil of the world; and for the sake of the Divine life thou wert a dwelling of the Trinity, and thou didst enlighten with faith those who draw near to thee. Wherefore we cry to thee: Rejoice, O Paul, most rich.

* * *

Memory of the Holy Martyr Eleutherius the Chamberlain[17]

Память святого мученика Елевферия Кувикулярия

13. Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus: Byzantine emperor, reigned from 912 to 959.
14. Here is meant Pope Agapetus II, who occupied the Roman see from 946 to 955.
15. Samos: one of the principal islands of the Aegean Sea (Archipelago), near the western coast of Asia Minor.
16. The Venerable Paul of Latros died on December 16, 956.
17. Cubicularius: the imperial chamberlain.

Saint Eleutherius was a native of Byzantium, and he brilliantly adorned his life with the flowers of piety. He received his upbringing at the imperial court, where he soon attained an honorable position. At that time he surpassed all in wealth and glory; yet for all that he was not carried away by earthly vanity. Remembering the incorruptible and eternal, and reckoning all earthly things as nothing, Eleutherius preferred "to be a doorkeeper in the house of God, rather than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Ps. 83:11). Turning his inner, intellectual gaze toward God, he daily exercised himself in singing sacred songs and adorned his life with every virtue. It was unbearable to see this for the enemy, the corrupter of souls[18], and he prompted one of the blessed one's servants to slander his master before the emperor.

That servant, presenting himself to the emperor, reported to him:

"My master has received baptism, has built a church[19], and, believing in the Crucified One, scorns the imperial decrees; he has acquired many sacred images, performs services to the Christian God, and by fasting, with tears and prostrations, wears out his body."

Having heard this denunciation of the master by the servant, the emperor was greatly angered and summoned the saint to him; but when the saint appeared, he, concealing his malice, spoke as though in a peaceable manner and said:

"Eleutherius! How has it come about that you have withdrawn, left us, and disregard our affection for the courtiers in general, and even my particular attention to you?"

To this the saint replied:

"O Emperor! Various infirmities of my body compel me to act thus."

Then the emperor said:

"Why, then, do you alone enjoy the well-tempered air on your estate? May we not also visit you and enjoy with you the blessings of country life?"

The blessed one paid no particular attention to these imperial words and did not attach to them their proper significance. In the evening he withdrew to his beloved estate, and, shut up as was his custom in a sep-

18. That is, the devil.
19. On his estate on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus, in Bithynia, by the river Sangarius.

arate room, he gave himself to contemplation of God; and when he fell asleep, he saw in a dream a deep abyss, as it were a well, into which he descended and there beheld a beautiful church. Seized with trembling at such a vision, Eleutherius the next morning again went to the emperor. The emperor again began to entice him with gentle speech, seeking to shake his faith in Christ. But, having vainly spent words and being unable to lead the saint astray, the emperor commanded that his head be cut off with the sword, and his honorable body be cast to be devoured by dogs and birds. Thus the blessed Eleutherius yielded up his spirit to God. His body, cast down in neglect, was taken by a certain Christian of priestly rank, who, anointing it with oil and censing it with incense, consigned it to burial in a fitting place[20].

* * *

Memory of the Venerable Pard the Hermit

Память преподобного Парда Отшельника

Saint Pard[21] was a Roman by birth, and in his youth he engaged in the trade of carrying goods by camel. Once he set out with his camels for Jericho and there settled at an inn. And at one time, by God's permission, through the working of the enemy of the human race, and through Pard's oversight, a small lad fell under the feet of the camels; he was trampled by them and died. This misfortune greatly grieved Pard, and he, withdrawing to Mount Arion, was tonsured a monk there and constantly lamented, repeating with weeping:

"I have destroyed a lad and must be condemned as a murderer."

Not far from the place where Pard lived, a lion dwelt in the valley, and the holy father would go to its lair and prod the beast with a forked staff, so that, enraged, it would tear him apart. But the lion did him no harm. Then the elder, seeing that he did not attain his goal, resolved to lie down to sleep on the path by which the lion went to the river to drink, hoping that the beast, passing by and seeing him, would tear him

20. The place of burial of St. Eleutherius is held to be his estate in Bithynia. The holy martyr suffered under Maximian at the beginning of the fourth century.
21. The Venerable Pard labored in the sixth century, in Palestine.

to pieces; and thus, suffering here, he would be delivered from torment in the age to come for the murder of the lad. As the saint had resolved, so he did: he lay down on the path, having taken off his clothing and placed it beside him. And the lion, passing along that path, leaped over the saint as if he were a man, silently and without touching him. Then the elder understood that the Lord had forgiven him that sin, and he returned to his dwelling place on the mountain, and remained there all the years of his later life, and until his death always and to all showed himself a model of a man of good conduct.

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THE SIXTEENTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 16

16 декабря

New Calendar December 16 · Old Calendar December 29 (civil dates)

Commemoration of the Holy Prophet Haggai

Память святого пророка Аггея

The Holy Prophet Haggai was of the tribe of Levi[1] and was born in the Babylonian captivity[2]. While still in his youth, he returned from Babylon to Jerusalem and prophesied there together with the Holy Prophet Zechariah for thirty-six years. Both of them lived more than 500 years before the Incarnation of Christ. St. Haggai was a contemporary of the building of the second Temple of Jerusalem, erected in place of the first, that of Solomon. The construction of this Temple was undertaken after the return from the Babylonian captivity under Zerubbabel, leader of the Jews whom the Persian king Cyrus had released to their homeland, and who appointed him governor of Judea. The erection of the Temple was attended with great difficulties, for the Samaritans hindered it; their participation in the building of the Temple had been refused by the Jews, who wished to preserve the purity and inviolability of worship from everything unclean and pagan. The Samaritans bribed the officials of certain Persian provinces, and these slandered the Jews before the Persian court. But the chief obstacle to the successful construction of the Temple was that the former ardent zeal of the Jews had grown cold. They turned their activity to other things; they busied themselves with building and adorning their own

1. Levi was the third son of Jacob by Leah.
2. The Chaldean king Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C. took Jerusalem and destroyed it. The best citizens with their families (from 14 to 18 thousand persons) were led away captive to the capital of the Chaldeans, Babylon. In the Babylonian captivity the Jews remained until 538, when Cyrus, king of the Medes and Persians, who overthrew the Chaldean kingdom, returned the captive Jews (about 40,000 men) to their homeland.

houses, supposing that the time had not yet come to build the house of God, and they put forward other pretexts to justify their negligence. At this time the Lord sent to the Jews the prophet Haggai with rebukes and threats, as well as with the promise of higher help and the glorious prophecy of the superiority and greatness of the second Temple over the first. With the help of God, and with the assistance of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, Zerubbabel overcame the schemes of the enemies and the inactivity of the Jews, and the Temple, begun in 520 B.C., was finished in 516 B.C., in the sixth year of the reign of the Persian king Darius. "The hands of Zerubbabel," said the Lord, "have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it, and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you" (Zech. 4:9). Of the discourses of the prophet Haggai relating to the building of the Temple there are four[3]. In them the prophet stirs the Jews to build, by rebuking their negligence and carelessness concerning the house of God, and by pointing out the unprofitableness of this in their affairs, the barrenness of the land and other chastisements of God; he also encouraged them by the safety and timeliness of the building, by assurance of the presence and protection of God in this work, by the greatness and superiority of the new Temple, by its necessity for them, and by the promise of the blessing of God for fulfilling the will of the Lord. The prophet magnificently depicts the future glory of this Temple and the establishment on earth of an unshakable kingdom, the kingdom of Christ: "Thus says the Lord of hosts: Yet once more, and it will be soon, I will shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land, and I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts. Mine is the silver and Mine is the gold, says the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former, says the Lord of hosts; and in this place I will give peace" (Hag. 2:6–10).

And the word of the Lord came again to the prophet: "Say to Zerubbabel, governor of Judea: I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I

3. Hag. 1:2–15, 2:1–9, 10–19, 20–23. Haggai was one of the twelve so-called Minor Prophets; his book, consisting of two chapters, occupies the tenth place in the series of books of these prophets.

will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms, and destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; I will overthrow the chariots and those who ride in them, and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of another. In that day, says the Lord of hosts, I will take you, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, My servant, says the Lord, and I will make you as a signet ring, for I have chosen you, says the Lord of hosts" (Hag. 2:21–24).

After his repose, St. Haggai was buried with honor near the graves of the priests, for he was of a priestly family. He was a man perfect in virtue, and, as a glorious and great prophet, he was loved and honored by all. His name, translated from the Hebrew into Russian, means festival or festive one[4].

St. Haggai is depicted as an elder with a comely face framed by a round beard; his head was partly bald.

* * *

Life of the Blessed Empress Theophano

Житие блаженной царицы Феофании

The Blessed Theophano was born in Constantinople and was of imperial lineage. Her parents, Constantine, who held the rank of illustrios[5], and his wife Anna, living in honorable wedlock, were for a long time barren, and therefore they always grieved that they had no children. Earnestly desiring to have fruit of their marriage, they prayed to our Most Pure Lady the Theotokos, and often coming to Her most venerable church, which was in the Forakion[6], they poured out their hearts before Her in fervent prayer.

"Let our barrenness be loosed," they prayed, "O Lady of the world, by Thy mercy, and by Thy intercession may we receive from the Creator the gift of children!"

And since they asked in faith, they received what they asked, by the grace of Her to whom they had prayed with zeal: they were released

4. The name of the Prophet Haggai is also found in Holy Scripture in the superscriptions of some psalms (Ps. 137:1–8, 145:1–10, 147:1–9), in the first book of Esdras (1 Esd. 1:1, 5:1, 6:1, 14:1), and in the Epistle of Saint Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews (Heb. 12:26).

5. Thus were called in Byzantium the highest dignitaries at the imperial court.

from their barrenness and bore a daughter, whom they named Theophano.

From the age of six Theophano began to be taught letters and instructed in every good work. Even in her childhood one could see clear signs of her future great virtues and holiness. Seeing her good disposition and her intelligence, Theophano's parents rejoiced greatly and hoped in time to find comfort in her virtuous conduct. Therefore they sought a youth like her in nobility of birth, in good disposition and in intelligence, to join her to him in lawful marriage, since she had already come of age and was adorned with all gifts more than her peers.

At this time Emperor Basil the Macedonian[7] sought a beautiful and virtuous maiden to be joined in marriage with his son Leo the Wise[8]. Finding Theophano the best of all the other maidens, he joined her in marriage to his son, who had already been proclaimed heir to the throne. The imperial wedding was celebrated amid general joy and rejoicing.

Some time later, the crafty enemy sowed tares in the imperial house between father and son, and the father rose up in great wrath against the son. Taking him and his wife Theophano, he cast them into prison and set a strong guard over them. This was done through the secret malice and crafty treachery of Theodore Santabarenus, Bishop of Euchaita, a sorcerer whom Emperor Leo did not love.

The matter began thus: when the firstborn of Emperor Basil and the elder brother of Emperor Leo, Constantine, died, Emperor Basil grieved for him and wept inconsolably, for he loved him very much. Then the aforementioned sorcerer, seeing the emperor in great sorrow and wishing to console him, by means of his sorceries showed the emperor his deceased son Constantine alive, sitting on a horse and riding toward him. Embracing his son and kissing him with love, the emperor again lost sight of him, for the magical apparition and phantom vanished. The emperor was astonished and terrified, and, taking the vision for reality, began to honor Santabarenus greatly, and, considering him

6. Foracia (Foracium) – a locality in Constantinople.
7. Basil I the Macedonian – Byzantine emperor, reigned 867–886.
8. Leo VI the Wise, successor of Basil the Macedonian, reigned 886–911.

his sincere friend, obeyed him in everything. But the young Leo, being prudent and God-fearing, loathed that sorcerer, and, hating him as an enemy of God, despised him. Theodore, thinking how he might avenge himself on Emperor Leo for such contempt, devised the following crafty stratagem. Choosing a convenient time, he approached Emperor Leo alone, and, pretending to be well-disposed and favorable toward him, said:

"You are young, and you go hunting with your father. For any eventuality it is necessary for you to carry secretly a small sword, so that you may be able at times to use it against a beast, and at other times to hand it to your father when needed, or in case some domestic enemy, of whom your father has not a few, should suddenly and unexpectedly attack your father; then you could at once draw the secretly carried sword, strike the enemy, and preserve your father's life."

Heeding this crafty counsel of his enemy and not suspecting his treachery, Leo began to carry secretly in his boot a small sword whenever he went hunting with his father or anywhere else.

After this, the treacherous Santabarenus said secretly to Emperor Basil:

"Your son Leo wishes suddenly to kill you, so that he may reign alone. The following will serve you as proof of his evil design: when you set out for the hunt, and he is with you, he carries a sword hidden in his boot at his leg, prepared so that at a convenient time he may suddenly strike you and kill you. If you wish to be convinced of this, put it to the test: go hunting, taking him with you, and when you come to the field, order someone to examine what he has in his boot."

Soon Emperor Basil, taking the young emperor, his son, set out hunting, and when they were in the field he ordered an examination of what Emperor Leo had in his boot, and there was found a small two-edged sword concealed. Basil at once flared up with the flame of inexpressible rage and anger against his son, considering true what Santabarenus had reported, that the son wished to kill him.

"For that purpose he prepared the sword," he said.

But Leo, being innocent of anything, assured him that he carried the sword not for his father's death but for the preservation of his life. But

the greatly enraged father, unwilling to hear a single word from him, at once confined him, and also his wife, the Blessed Theophano, in a certain secret chamber in the imperial palace, and set a strong guard over them. Thus the crafty sorcerer Santabarenus avenged himself on Emperor Leo; and the most terrible thing in this was that, at the instigation of the same Santabarenus, the father wished to have his son's eyes gouged out and removed. And this deed would certainly have been carried out, had not the patriarch and the whole senate restrained the emperor.

For more than three years the innocent Emperor Leo and the blessed Theophano, who had done no evil whatsoever, remained in confinement. There they occupied themselves with nothing else than prayer and fasting, grieving over their imprisonment and calling upon the All-seeing God as witness to their innocence. Several times the Senate wished to petition the Emperor on behalf of the son, but did not find a suitable moment. At last there came an occasion when such a petition could be made. It happened thus. In the Emperor's palace there was a bird, a parrot, taught to pronounce certain words in the human voice, and by its speech it amused the Emperor and others who heard the parrot. Once the Emperor, celebrating the feast of the holy Prophet Elijah, invited all his courtiers to a royal dinner, and, having arranged a feast, bade everyone rejoice and make merry with him. That bird, often speaking in human fashion, repeated, whether taught by someone or by chance, it is not known, such words:

"Alas, alas, Lord Leo!"

Hearing this, all the courtiers at the meal sat in confusion, leaving off their food and drink. Seeing the courtiers in confusion, neither eating nor drinking, the Emperor asked why they were so sorrowful. Then they, judging the time favorable, rose in tears and said:

"If a bird devoid of reason grieves over its master, who suffers innocently, and weeping and seeking him, says, 'Alas, alas, Lord Leo!', how then can we, rational and speaking creatures, who undoubtedly know that your son, and our lord, suffers innocently through malice, and through calumny bears your paternal wrath, how can we make merry, eat and drink?! Ought we not rather to grieve even more? O Emperor!

If your son has in any way sinned against you, his father, and has planned to raise his hand against you, give him to us here, and we shall hew him into pieces. But if he is innocent of anything, as we undoubtedly know, then why do you torment your own blood?"

At such words the Emperor was moved to tenderness, and, stirred in heart and by natural pity, he at once ordered Emperor Leo to be brought out of confinement, his hair that had grown during the imprisonment to be cut, and, having clothed him in imperial garments, to be brought to him with honor. When this had been done, the Emperor rose in tears, embraced his son, began to kiss him, and restored to him his former imperial dignity.

After living a little while longer, Emperor Basil fell ill and died, leaving the imperial power to his son. Leo, however, after his father's death, seized the sorcerer Santavarinus, ordered him to be beaten, his eyes gouged out, and sent him into exile in the city of Athens[9].

Thus the malice of the sorcerer turned upon his own head. This Santavarinus was by faith a Manichaean, by doctrine a sorcerer, in appearance a Christian, in rank a bishop, and he was considered holy by Emperor Basil on account of his miracles, wrought by sorcery.

Meanwhile the blessed Theophano, who after her imprisonment had entered upon the life of the palace, diligently cared for the salvation of her soul, counting the imperial glory as nothing and despising, as dust and a dream, the sweetness and vanity of worldly life. Day and night she constantly had on her lips psalms, spiritual songs and prayers, and she spent her whole life pleasing God and seeking Him through works of mercy. She took no care for the imperial adornment of her body, and if outwardly she was clothed with a certain seemliness, on the other hand, beneath her garments, upon her body, she wore a coarse hair shirt, by which her flesh was mortified. Her life was ascetical: she fed on plain bread and dried herbs; abundant dishes at table were entirely banished by her.

The riches and precious things that came into her hands were distributed by her to needy poor and destitute, orphans and widows; pre-

cious garments and things were given to these same people. The poor cells of monastics and monasteries were renewed by her and enriched with estates and all that was necessary. Such was the zeal and care of that Christ-loving Empress for all! She regarded her servants and handmaids as brothers and sisters, and she never addressed anyone merely by name, but honored each with a title in the Lord, respecting the name, rank and office of each. Her tongue uttered no oath, and no corrupt word came out of her mouth, neither falsehood nor slander, nor any unseemly word whatsoever. She related to all with love: she wept with those who wept, and rejoiced with those who rejoiced. Although her bed was spread with fine linen[10] and adorned with golden ornaments, she did not sleep on it; instead she laid a clean mat upon the floor, covering the sharp bones and teeth of animals, and lay down to sleep upon it; and this her bed she moistened with tears every night, according to the saying of the Prophet David (Ps. 6:7), and after a very brief sleep she immediately rose to praise God. From such severe living, full of every privation, Theophano fell into a great bodily illness; yet she did not weaken in soul from unceasing prayer, nor did she cease to be instructed in the Divine Law, reading the sacred books and fulfilling what she read. All her cares were directed toward helping the wronged, defending widows, caring for orphans, comforting the sorrowing, wiping the tears of the weeping; and she was a mother to all who had no shelter or help. Living in the world, she rejected all that is worldly; remaining in marriage, she loved the good yoke of Christ and, taking up the cross upon her shoulder, bore it, and in this way pleased God.

Foreseeing the departure of her soul from the body, the blessed Theophano commanded that all should come to her to take leave. Then, giving everyone the final and last kiss, she passed from the earthly kingdom to the heavenly and stood before the King of glory, adorned, as with the imperial purple[11], with her many virtues. Therefore she

9. Athens – the capital of the ancient Greek state, famed for its buildings, works of art, the development of commerce and industry, and especially its schools and philosophical academies. Athens lay on the eastern promontory of central Greece on the Aegean.

10. Fine linen (byssus) – a precious, fine, soft, shining linen fabric.

11. Purple (bagryanitsa) – a ceremonial garment of purple color, the imperial porphyra, a necessary attribute of the Byzantine emperors and a sign of their royal dignity.

was numbered among the saints who pleased God by their virtues, and her honorable body was committed to burial with honor[12].

The husband of Theophano, Emperor Leo the Wise, even during her life, seeing her great holiness and honoring her not as a wife but as his mistress and intercessor before God, resolved in advance to build a church in her name. But the Saint, learning of this, not only did not consent to it but strictly forbade doing so. Therefore the church already begun in her name was renamed in honor of all the saints, and by the same Emperor, in counsel with the whole Church, the feast of All Saints was established on the first Sunday after Pentecost. The Emperor said:

"If Theophano is a saint, let her memory also be celebrated together with all the saints, to the glory of God, who is glorified by all the saints!"

To Him be glory from us also, forever. Amen.

* * *

Memory of the holy martyr Marinus

Память святого мученика Марина

Saint Marinus lived in the reign of Carinus[13], and being noble by birth, despite his youthful age, bore the title of synclitic or senator[14]. As a Christian, he was seized and compelled to offer sacrifice to the idols. But since he did not submit and did not fulfill this demand, he was hanged and hacked with swords, and then placed upon fire. After that they cast him upon a heated griddle and then into a boiling cauldron; but by the grace of God, Marinus remained unharmed through all these tortures. Then they released wild beasts upon the

12. The Blessed Empress Theophania reposed about the year 893. She was buried in the church of All Saints, built by her husband, near the church of the Holy Apostles, where a women's monastery was afterwards established. The Russian pilgrim Stephen of Novgorod, in 1342, calls this monastery the monastery of St. Constantine, and the hierodeacon Zosimas (1420) calls it the monastery of Philostratos; both saw in it the relics of the holy empress together with the relics of the Martyr Clement of Ancyra, whose memory the Church keeps on January 23. At present the relics of Theophania rest in the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

13. Carinus was Roman emperor from 282 to 283.

14. The *synkletikoi* were some of the most important counselors and dignitaries of the emperor, who formed the *synklitos* (the imperial council).

saint, lions and bears, but these also did not touch him. Meanwhile the malice of the pagans increased still more against the steadfast confessor of the faith of Christ: they resolved to force him into the idol temple and compel him to offer sacrifice. The Saint then said:

"I wish to offer sacrifice to the gods."

Hearing such a declaration from the martyr, the Emperor and all who surrounded him rejoiced. But Marinus, entering the temple with everyone, prayed to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the idols fell and were broken to pieces. The Emperor was grieved, struck by such an unexpected event, and immediately ordered the martyr's head to be cut off. Thus Saint Marinus gave up his spirit to the Lord; and his relics were piously buried by God-fearing Christians[15].

* * *

15. St. Marinus suffered about the year 283.

THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 17

17 декабря

New Calendar December 17 · Old Calendar December 30 (civil dates)

Life of the Holy Prophet Daniel and with him the Holy Three Youths Ananias, Azariah and Mishael

Житие святого пророка Даниила и с ним святых трех отроков Анании, Азарии и Мисаила

The Holy Prophet Daniel was of royal lineage, of the tribe of Judah. In his youth he was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar[8449] and, together with the Jewish king Jehoiakim, was led from Jerusalem to Babylon[8450]. There, even in his youth, he became renowned for his God-given gifts, above all when he wisely rebuked the unrighteous and lawless judges and delivered the innocent Susanna from death.

At that time the Jews who were in the Babylonian captivity had two elders as judges, chosen to decide the disputes that arose among them. On appointed days these elders gathered in the house of a certain noble and wealthy man, Joakim, and there they judged the disputes among the Jewish people.

Joakim had a wife named Susanna, the daughter of Helkias, who was very beautiful and God-fearing. Her parents were righteous people, and they had brought up their daughter in all the precepts of the law of Moses. But those elders were lawless men: under the guise of judgment they practised injustice, so that the word of Scripture was fulfilled concerning them: "iniquity came forth from Babylon, from the elders, the judges" (Dan. 13:5).

These very elders saw Susanna going daily into her husband's garden and coming out again, and lust for her was born in them. They perverted their minds and turned away their eyes, so as not to look toward heaven or remember righteous judgments. Yet they did not dis-

close their passion to one another, for they were ashamed to confess it. Each of them sought a convenient time to satisfy his passion. And they diligently watched every day to see Susanna, and they said to one another:

"Let us go home, for it is the hour of dinner." And having gone out they separated from one another, but returning they came again to the same place. When they questioned one another about the reason for it, they confessed their lust. Then they together appointed a time when they might find her alone.

Once, while they were waiting for a suitable day, Susanna entered, as always, with only two maidservants, and wished to bathe in the garden, because it was hot. There was no one there except the two elders, who had hidden themselves and were watching her. Susanna said to the maidservants:

"Bring me oil and soap, and shut the doors of the garden, that I may bathe."

They did as she said: they shut the doors of the garden and went out by the side doors to fetch what they had been commanded, and they did not see the elders, because the elders had hidden themselves. And when the maidservants had gone out, the two elders rose up, drew near to Susanna and said:

"Behold, the doors of the garden are shut and no one sees us, and we have desire for you. Therefore consent to us and lie with us. If not, we will bear witness against you that a young man was with you, and that for this reason you sent your maidservants away from you."

Then Susanna groaned and said:

"I am hemmed in on every side: for if I do this, it is death to me; and if I do not, I shall not escape from your hands. It is better for me not to do this and to fall into your hands, than to sin before God."

And Susanna cried out with a loud voice; the two elders also cried out against her. And one of them ran and opened the doors of the garden.

When those in the house heard the cry in the garden, they rushed in by the side doors to see what had happened to Susanna. And when the

elders spoke their words, her servants were exceedingly put to shame, for nothing of the kind had ever been said about Susanna.

And on the next day, when the people gathered at the house of Joakim, her husband, the two elders also came, full of lawless intent against Susanna, to put her to death. And they said before the people:

"Send for Susanna, the daughter of Helkias, the wife of Joakim." And they sent.

And she came, and her parents, her children, and all her relatives. Susanna was very delicate and beautiful of face. And these lawless men commanded that her face, which was covered, be uncovered, that they might feast their eyes on her beauty. Her relatives and all who knew her wept. But the two elders stood up in the midst of the people and laid their hands on her head. She, weeping, looked toward heaven, for her heart trusted in the Lord. And the elders said:

"As we walked alone in the garden, this woman came in with two maidservants, and shut the doors of the garden, and sent the maidservants away. And a young man, who had been hidden there, came to her and lay with her. We, being in a corner of the garden and seeing such lawlessness, ran to them and saw them together, but the young man we could not hold, for he was stronger than we, and, opening the doors of the garden, he leapt out. But this woman we seized and questioned: who was that young man? But she would not tell us. Of this we bear witness."

And the assembly believed them, as the elders of the people and judges, and they condemned Susanna to death. Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice and said:

"O eternal God, who knowest secret things and knowest all things before they come to be. Thou knowest that they have falsely witnessed against me, and behold, I die, having done nothing of what these men maliciously invented against me."

And the Lord heard her voice.

As she was being led to death, God stirred up by the Holy Spirit a young man named Daniel. And he cried out with a loud voice:

"I am clean from the blood of her!"

Then the whole people turned to him and said:

"What is this word that you have spoken?"

Then Daniel, standing in their midst, said:

"Are you so unwise, sons of Israel, that without examining and learning the truth you have condemned a daughter of Israel? Return to the judgment, for these elders have falsely witnessed against her."

And at once all the people returned, and the elders said to Daniel:

"Sit in the midst of us and declare it to us, for God has given you the dignity of elders."

And Daniel said to the people:

"Separate them far from one another, and I will question them."

When they were separated one from another, Daniel called one of them and said to him:

"You who have grown old in evil days! Now your sins have come to light, which you committed before, rendering unrighteous judgments, condemning the innocent and acquitting the guilty, while the Lord says: the innocent and righteous you shall not put to death (Deut. 25:1). Now, if you saw this woman, tell me: under what tree did you see them conversing with each other?"

He said: "Under a mastic tree."[1] Daniel said:

"You have indeed lied against your own head, for behold, the Angel of God, having received the sentence from God, will cut you in two."

Having removed him, Daniel commanded that the other be brought, and said to him:

"Seed of Canaan, and not of Judah! Beauty has beguiled you, and lust has corrupted your heart. Thus you have acted toward the daughters of Israel, and from fear they consorted with you; but the daughter of Judah would not endure your lawlessness. Now tell me: under what tree did you catch them conversing together?"

He said:

"Under a green oak."[2]

Daniel said to him:

"You have indeed lied against your own head, for the Angel of God waits with a sword to cut you in two, that he may destroy you."

1. In the Slavonic, "under a thorn": Gr. *schinos* (the mastic tree).
2. Slavonic, "under a bird-cherry": Gr. *mrinos* (the so-called stone oak).

Then the whole assembly cried out with a loud voice and blessed God, who saves those who hope in Him, and they rose up against the two elders, because Daniel had, through their own mouths, convicted them of false witness. And they dealt with them as they had plotted against their neighbour, according to the law of Moses, and put them to death; and innocent blood was saved on that day. And Helkias and his wife glorified God for their daughter Susanna, with Joakim her husband and all her relatives, because no shameful deed had been found in her.

And Daniel became great before the people from that day onward, because of his wisdom and the divine gifts that were in him.[3]

At that time Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, said to Ashpenaz, the chief of his eunuchs, that he should bring from the captive sons of Israel, of royal and princely lineage, youths who had no bodily defect, handsome in appearance, quick to understand every science, discerning and fit to serve in the royal palaces, and that he should teach them the books and the Chaldean language. The king appointed for them a daily portion of food from the royal table and wine which he himself drank, and commanded that they be nurtured for three years, at the end of which they were to present themselves before the king. Among them were, from the sons of Judah, Daniel and three other youths, also of royal descent: Ananias, Azariah and Mishael. And the chief of the eunuchs renamed them: Daniel as Belteshazzar, Ananias as Shadrach, Mishael as Meshach and Azariah as Abednego.[4] Daniel, together with his three companions, resolved in his heart not to defile himself with the dainties of the royal table or with the wine which the king drank, and therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs that they might not be defiled by them. God granted Daniel mercy and favour in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, who said to Daniel:

"I fear my lord the king, who himself appointed your food and drink; if he sees your faces thinner than those of the youths your companions, you will make my head guilty before the king."

3. The account of Susanna is found in ch. 13 of the book of the Prophet Daniel and belongs to the non-canonical parts of the Bible.

4. They were renamed in token of their dependence upon Nebuchadnezzar.

Then Daniel said to Amelsar, whom the chief of the eunuchs had appointed over Daniel, Ananias, Azariah and Mishael:

"Make trial of your servants for ten days; let them give us vegetables for food and water for drink. And afterwards let our faces and the faces of those youths who eat the royal food appear before you, and then deal with your servants as you see fit."

He hearkened unto them in this matter, and tried them for ten days. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer, and they were fuller in flesh than all the youths who ate of the king's dainties. So Amelsar took away their portion of meat and the wine that they should drink, and gave them pulse. And as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. At the end of those days, when the king had appointed that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king spoke with them, and among them all there was found none like Daniel, Ananias, Azariah and Mishael; and they stood before the king. And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his realm[5].

In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams; and his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him. And the king commanded that the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans[8456] be called, that they might tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. And the king said to them:

"I have had a dream, and my spirit is troubled; I wish to know the dream."

Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king:

"O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will declare the interpretation."

The king answered and said to the Chaldeans:

5. The account of the upbringing of Daniel, Ananias, Azariah and Misael at the royal court is found in Dan. 1:3–20.

"The word has gone from me; if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made ruins."

The Chaldeans answered the king and said:

"There is not a man on earth who can declare the king's matter; therefore no king, however great and powerful, has asked such a thing of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean. The thing the king demands is so difficult that no one can declare it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

For this the king was furious and very angry, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. When the decree went out to slay the wise men, they sought Daniel and his companions to be slain. Then Daniel took counsel and discretion from Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to slay the wise men of Babylon; he asked him why the decree from the king was so urgent. Then Arioch made the matter known to Daniel. And Daniel went in and asked the king to appoint a time, that he would make known the interpretation. Then Daniel went to his house and made the thing known to Ananias, Azariah and Mishael, his companions, that they should seek mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret, that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision, and Daniel blessed the God of heaven. After this Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had commanded to slay the wise men of Babylon, and said to him:

"Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will declare the interpretation."

Then Arioch brought Daniel in before the king in haste, and said to him:

"I have found a man of the captives of Judah who will make known to the king the interpretation."

The king said to Daniel:

"Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen, and its interpretation?"

Daniel answered the king and said:

"The secret which the king has asked cannot be declared to the king by wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days; by the condescension of His mercy toward our humility He has also revealed to us your dream, for I know it not by any special wisdom of my own, but by the revelation of the merciful God. Your dream and the visions of your head upon your bed were these. As for you, O king, your thoughts came to you upon your bed about what would come to pass after this (that is, who shall reign after you), and He who reveals secrets has shown you what will be. For you, O king, had this vision: behold, a great image. This image was huge; in extraordinary splendor it stood before you, and its form was awesome. This image's head was of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched until a stone was cut from the mountain without hands, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away, so that no trace of them was found; and the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. This is your dream, O king. And its interpretation is this: the head of gold is you and the kings of Babylon who were before you. The silver means that after you shall arise another kingdom, inferior to yours. After this there shall be a third kingdom, of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth[6]. Then a fourth kingdom shall arise, which shall be strong as iron; for as iron breaks in pieces and crushes all things (both bronze, and silver, and gold), so it shall break in pieces and crush all. And whereas you saw the feet and toes partly of iron and partly of potter's clay, it means that the kingdom shall be divided, and in part there shall be in it the

6. This kingdom is not named by the prophet, but according to the interpreters (Blessed Jerome), this kingdom is the Macedonian, which, though it fell short of the preceding kingdoms in splendor, just as bronze falls short of gold and silver, surpassed them in strength, as bronze is firmer than gold and silver. This understanding is confirmed by other passages in the Book of the Prophet Daniel, where the Greek kingdom, which succeeded the Medo-Persian, is named precisely as the first kingdom after it (Dan. 8:31–22, 11:2–4).

strength of iron, but there shall also be something fragile. As for the mixing of iron with clay, it means that they will attempt to enter into union by marriage alliances; but they shall not cleave one to another, just as iron does not mix with clay[8458]. And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever, and its dominion shall not pass to another people. This is the meaning of the dream, and its interpretation is sure[7]."

Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and paid homage to Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him. The king answered Daniel and said:

"Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of lords, and the Sovereign of kings, since you could reveal this secret[8]."

Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief governor over all the wise men of Babylon. Also at Daniel's request he honored his companions, Ananias, Azariah and Mishael, with great honors, making them rulers of the land of Babylon[9].

In the eighteenth year of the Babylonian captivity, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, and set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon[10].

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7. The stone that was cut out of the mountain without the help of hands and struck the image is, according to the teaching of the Church, Christ, the Son of God, who will be born of the Pure and Unwedded Virgin, without a husband. He, having crushed and destroyed all temporal kingdoms, will raise up a kingdom which will never be destroyed for ever, and this kingdom will be spiritual.

8. The dream seen by Nebuchadnezzar was not a simple dream, but was a revelation to him of the will of God. In such a form other pagan kings also received revelations from God, for example Abimelech, king of Gerar (Gen. 20:3), Pharaoh, king of Egypt (Gen. 41:1–9), Eliphaz, king of Teman (Job 42:12–18). That pagan kings receive heavenly revelation should not seem strange. The pagan kings who governed the destinies of peoples were executors of the will of God, instruments of the omnipotence of God; from God they received their high rank, and by God they were invisibly guided and supported in their actions (Is. 44 and following). This is precisely why they were sometimes deemed worthy of direct revelations from God.

9. The account of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the interpretation of this dream by the prophet Daniel is found in the same book: Dan. 2:1–49. (From the second chapter the reading from the Prophecies for the Nativity of Christ is read: Dan. 2:31–36, 44–45.)

10. What significance was ascribed to this statue the prophet does not say: perhaps it was the idol of one of the gods whom the Babylonians served, or perhaps this statue was set up in honor of Nebuchadnezzar himself.

And King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps[11], governors, captains, judges, treasurers, counselors, sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. So the satraps, governors, captains, judges, treasurers, counselors, sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces assembled at the dedication of the image and stood before it. On that same plain Nebuchadnezzar also set up a furnace of blazing fire, to destroy those who would not obey his royal command. Then a herald cried aloud:

"To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages: at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

Therefore, at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshipped the golden image.

At that very time certain Chaldeans came forward and denounced Ananias, Azariah and Mishael to the king, saying:

"They do not serve your gods, nor do they worship the golden image that you have set up."

Then the king, calling for them, asked whether it was true that they did not serve his gods or worship the golden image. They answered:

"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than it was usually heated, and that Ananias, Azariah and Mishael, bound, be cast into it. The king's command was carried out exactly: these men were bound and cast into

11. Satraps — the highest supreme dignitaries at the Persian court, who governed individual regions of the kingdom.

the midst of the blazing furnace in all their clothing. And since the king's command was very strict and the furnace was heated excessively, even the executors of this punishment perished from the fire. But these three men, Ananias, Azariah and Mishael, bound and cast into the very midst of the flame, suffered no harm at all; they walked freely in the midst of the flames, praising God and blessing the Lord. Meanwhile the servants of the king who had cast them in did not cease to feed the furnace with naphtha, pitch, tow, and brushwood; the flame rose above the furnace forty-nine cubits, burst out, and consumed those Chaldeans whom it reached near the furnace. But the Angel of the Lord came down into the furnace together with Azariah and his companions; he drove the flame of fire out of the furnace and made the midst of the furnace like a moist, whistling wind, so that the fire did not touch them at all, nor hurt nor trouble them. Then these three, as with one mouth, sang in the furnace, blessing and glorifying God:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, God of our fathers, and praised and exalted above all forever, etc.[12]

King Nebuchadnezzar, hearing them singing, was astonished and rose quickly, and said to his nobles:

"Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?"

They answered the king:

"Truly so, O king!"

To this he said:

"Behold, I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not harmed; and the appearance of the fourth is like the Son of God."

Then Nebuchadnezzar drew near to the mouth of the furnace, heated with fire, and said:

"Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come hither!"

Then Ananias, Azariah and Mishael came out from the midst of the fire. And the satraps, governors, captains and counselors of the king

gathered together and saw that the fire had no power over the bodies of these men: the hair of their heads was not singed, their garments were not changed, and not even the smell of burning had passed upon them. And the king bowed before God in their presence and said:

"Blessed is the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him. And I give command that from every people, tribe and tongue, whoever speaks blasphemy against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego shall be hewn in pieces and his house made a ruin, for there is no other God who could thus save His servants."

After this the king honored the three youths with still greater honor, raising them above all and granting them authority over the other Jews in his kingdom.[13]

Meanwhile Nebuchadnezzar, prospering on his throne, became greatly proud, and after a little time he saw another dream, which foretold his fall and humbling.

He saw in a dream a tree in the midst of the earth. It was a large and strong tree, and its height reached to heaven, and it was visible to the ends of the whole earth. Its leaves were beautiful, and its fruit was abundant, so that all might be fed from it; the beasts of the field found shade beneath it, the birds of heaven nested in its branches, and all flesh was nourished from it. And behold, the Watcher and the Holy One came down from heaven. Crying aloud, He said:

"Cut down this tree, lop off its branches, shake off its leaves and scatter its fruit; let the beasts depart from beneath it and the birds from its branches; but leave the main root in the earth, and let it, bound with bands of iron and bronze, be watered with the dew of heaven amid the grass of the field, and let it dwell with the beasts in the grass of the

12. This hymn of praise is found in the same book: Dan. 3:52–90; this hymn serves as the basis for the 7th and 8th odes of the church canons. The account of the three youths in the furnace of Babylon is understood in the liturgical hymnody of our Church as a prefiguration of the incorrupt sojourn of the Savior in the tomb. For this reason the third chapter of the Book of the Prophet Daniel is read in church — at Vespers on Great Saturday.

13. This miracle clearly bore witness for Nebuchadnezzar and his courtiers, who had slandered the righteous before him, and equally bears witness for all people in all times that for the righteous who are guarded by God and who hope in Him no dangers are terrible (Is. 43:2; Ps. 90:1–7 and others).

earth. Let the heart of man be taken from it, and let the heart of a beast be given to it, and let seven times pass over it."

This dream troubled the king, and again he gathered all the wise men of Babylon, the diviners and sorcerers, and told them his dream, that they might explain its meaning to him. But none could do so, until Daniel was summoned, upon whom the Spirit of God rested. Hearing the king's dream and reflecting, Daniel said:

"My lord! Let this dream be for thy enemies, and its meaning for thy adversaries. The tree which thou sawest is thou, O king, who hast grown great and strong, and thy greatness has increased and reached to heaven, and thy power to the ends of the earth. But soon thou wilt lose the kingdom: thou shalt be cut off from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; thou shalt be fed with grass like an ox, and thou shalt be watered with the dew of heaven; and so seven years shall pass, until thou knowest that the Most High rules over the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever He will. And as for the command to leave the main root of the tree, this means that thy kingdom shall remain with thee until thou knowest the power of heaven. Therefore, O king, let my counsel be pleasing to thee: redeem thy sins by righteousness and thy iniquities by mercy to the poor; perhaps God will forgive thy transgressions."

Thus the holy Daniel explained the dream to the king, and all that he had said came to pass.

After twelve months had passed, while walking in the royal palaces at Babylon, the king said:

"Is not this the great Babylon which I have built as the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty!"

While these words were still on the king's lips, a voice came from heaven:

"To thee it is said, King Nebuchadnezzar: the kingdom has departed from thee! Thou shalt be cut off from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; thou shalt be fed with grass like an ox, and

seven times[14] shall pass over thee, until thou knowest that the Most High rules over the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever He will."

Immediately this word was fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: his mind was darkened and he fell into frenzy. Then they bound him with chains; and since he could not remain under the roof of the palace, he was left under the open sky, cut off from men, ate grass like an ox, and his body was watered with the dew of heaven, so that his hair grew like a lion's and his nails like a bird's. At the end of seven years, during which no one else dared to take his kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar lifted his eyes to heaven, and his understanding returned to him; and he blessed the Most High, praised and glorified the Everlasting, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and whose kingdom is from generation to generation. "And all who dwell on the earth are as nothing," the king reflected, "and according to His will He acts both among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and there is none who can resist His hand or say to Him: What hast Thou done?" At that time his understanding returned to him, and to the glory of his kingdom there returned to him his dignity and his former appearance; then his counselors and nobles sought him, and he was restored to his kingdom, and his greatness was increased still more.[15]

And Nebuchadnezzar lived, praising, blessing and glorifying the King of Heaven. He reigned altogether forty-three years and died in peace. After the death of Nebuchadnezzar, his son Evil-merodach succeeded him on the throne of Babylon. He released from the prison house the captive King of Judah, Jehoiachin, who had been held there in chains. He spoke with him kindly and set his throne above the thrones of the kings who were with him in Babylon; he changed his prison garments, and he dined with him always, all the days of his life (4 Kgdms. 25:27–30; Jer. 52:31–34).

After the death of Evil-merodach, Nabonidus, the son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar, became king, having made his son Belshazzar co-ruler with him. In his reign the prophet Daniel was granted many visions, in which, under the figures of various beasts, were indicated the kings and

14. That is, years.
15. The account of the punishment of Nebuchadnezzar for his pride is found in Dan. 4:1–34.

kingdoms that would follow, the Antichrist, the end of the age and the Last Judgment.[16]

"I saw," says Daniel, "that thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days sat down; His raiment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool; His throne was like a flame of fire, its wheels burning fire. A river of fire issued and flowed before Him; thousands upon thousands served Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him; the judges sat down in judgment, and the books were opened."

And other terrible and dreadful revelations were seen by him, of which enough has been recorded in his book.[17]

At one time King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and drank wine before their eyes. Having tasted the wine, Belshazzar commanded that the golden and silver vessels be brought, which Nebuchadnezzar his grandfather had taken out of the temple at Jerusalem, that the king, his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. Then the golden and silver vessels were brought, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine and praised idols of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone, but the Eternal God, who has power over them, they did not glorify. In that very hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote upon the wall of the royal palace, where the light of the lamp fell, and the king saw the hand that was writing. Then the king's countenance changed; thoughts troubled him, the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against the other. The king cried out loudly that the enchanters, Chaldeans and diviners be brought, and the king said to the wise men of Babylon:

16. Daniel's vision of the great battle (Dan. 10:1–21, 11:1–45, 12:1–13), according to the explanation of the book itself, refers to Antiochus Epiphanes — that most vicious enemy of the Jews — and signifies his persecutions of the Jews and his final perdition. According to the opinion of some interpreters, this prophecy, in some of its particulars not applicable to Antiochus Epiphanes, prefigurally speaks of the antichrist, his persecutions of believers, and his perdition. And the Apostle Paul, foretelling the appearance of the antichrist in the world, depicts him with features (2 Thess. 2:4) similar to those which in the prophet Daniel are ascribed to Antiochus (Dan. 8:9–12, 11:28–31, 36–39).

17. Dan. 7:9–10. The Ancient of Days, that is, the Eternal (hence God).

"Whoever reads what is written and explains its meaning to me shall be clothed in purple, and a golden chain shall be upon his neck, and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."[8470]

And all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read what was written nor explain its meaning to the king. King Belshazzar was greatly troubled, and his nobles were dismayed. Then the queen, Belshazzar's grandmother, the wife of Nebuchadnezzar, entered the banqueting hall and told him of Daniel, who had within him the Spirit of God, and who in the days of his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had been appointed chief over all the wise men, sorcerers, Chaldeans and diviners, for his great understanding and wisdom and his skill in interpreting dreams and visions. Then Daniel was brought in, and the king said to him:

"Art thou Daniel, one of the captive sons of Judah whom my grandfather, King Nebuchadnezzar, brought from Judea? I have heard of thee that the Spirit of God is in thee, and light, understanding and high wisdom are found in thee. Now, read to me what is written on the wall by the fingers of an unseen hand and explain its meaning, which many wise men, enchanters and diviners who came to me could not do. If thou canst read what is written and explain its meaning to me, thou shalt be clothed in purple, and a golden chain shall be upon thy neck, and thou shalt be the third ruler in my kingdom."

Then Daniel answered and said to the king:

"Let thy gifts remain with thee, and give thy honors to another; but I will read the writing to the king and explain its meaning to him."

Having said this to the king, Holy Daniel first began to remind him of his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar, how for his pride he had been punished by God: he lost the form of a man, was cut off from men, and fed on grass. Next Daniel rebuked the king for his pride, that, forgetting the chastisement of God visited upon his grandfather, he had not humbled his heart before the Lord, but had exalted himself against the Lord of heaven and defiled the vessels of His temple by drinking wine at a feast with his nobles and his concubines. He also rebuked him for glorifying gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone and wood, which see nothing, hear nothing and understand nothing, and for not glorifying

the God in whose hand is his breath and all his fate. Having rebuked the king for all this, Daniel turned to the writing and began to read it. And this is what was written: *mene, tekel, peres*. Daniel explained the writing thus: *mene* means that God has numbered thy kingdom and brought it to an end; *tekel*: thou art weighed in the balances and found very light; *peres*: thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and the Persians. Hearing this, the king, in keeping with his promise, honored Daniel, though he was troubled in spirit on account of the sorrowful prophecy. And they clothed Daniel in purple, put a golden chain about his neck, and the king proclaimed concerning him that he should be the third ruler in his kingdom.

Daniel's prediction came to pass. In that very night Belshazzar, king of Babylon, was slain, and Darius the Mede, together with Cyrus the Persian, received the kingdom, being sixty-two years old.[18]

During his reign Darius set up in the kingdom a hundred and twenty satraps, and over them three princes, of whom one was Daniel; these satraps were to render accounts to them, so that the king should suffer no burden. Daniel surpassed the other princes and satraps, because a lofty spirit was in him, and the king already intended to set him over the whole kingdom.

Then the princes and satraps began to seek a pretext for accusing Daniel in the administration of the kingdom; but they could find no pretext or fault, because he was faithful. And these men said:

"We shall find no pretext against Daniel unless we find one against him in the law of his God."

Then these princes and satraps came before the king and spoke to him thus:

"King Darius! O king, live forever! All the princes of the kingdom, the governors, satraps, counselors and captains have agreed among themselves that a royal ordinance be made and a decree issued: whoever for thirty days shall ask any god or man, except thee, O king, shall be cast into the lions' den to be devoured. Therefore, O king, confirm

18. That is, the first after the kings Nabonidus and Belshazzar.

this decision and sign the decree, that it may be unalterable, like the law of the Medes and Persians, and not be violated."

King Darius, not perceiving their wicked intention, signed the decree and the ordinance. Daniel, learning that such a decree had been signed, went to his house; the windows of his upper room were open toward Jerusalem, and he knelt down three times a day, prayed to his God and gave praise to Him, as he had done before. Then these men spied on him and found Daniel praying and asking mercy before his God. They came and reminded the king of his ordinance:

"Did not you, O king, sign a decree that whatever man shall for thirty days ask any god or man, except thee, O king, shall be cast into the lions' den?"

The king answered and said:

"This word is firm, like the law of the Medes and Persians, which admits of no change."

Then they answered and told the king that Daniel, one of the captive sons of Judah, paid no heed either to the king or to the decree signed by him, but three times a day prayed his prayers. The king, hearing this, was greatly grieved, and resolved in his heart to save Daniel, and until sunset he earnestly strove to deliver him. But those men came before the king and said to him:

"Know, O king, that by the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or ordinance confirmed by the king may be changed."

Then the king commanded that Daniel be brought and cast into the lions' den; and the king said to Daniel:

"Thy God, whom thou servest without ceasing, will deliver thee!"

Afterward a large stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the pit, and the king sealed it with his signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, lest his enemies should do Daniel any harm: for he trusted wicked men no more than fierce beasts. Then the king went to his palace, lay down to sleep without supper, and did not even command food to be brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

But God shut the mouths of the lions, and they did Daniel no harm.

In the morning the king rose at dawn and went hastily to the lions' den. And the king cried out with a loud voice:

"Daniel, servant of the living God! Could thy God, whom thou servest without ceasing, deliver thee from the lions?"

Then Daniel said to the king:

"O king, live forever! My God sent His Angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they did not hurt me, because I was found blameless before Him; and before thee, O king, I have done no wrong."

Then the king rejoiced greatly over Daniel and commanded that he be brought up out of the pit; and Daniel was lifted out of the pit, and no injury was found on him. And the king commanded, and those men who had accused Daniel were brought and cast into the lions' den, both they and their children and their wives; and before they had reached the bottom of the pit, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones. After that King Darius wrote to all peoples, tribes and tongues dwelling throughout the earth:

"Peace be multiplied to you! By me is given this command: that in every region of my kingdom men shall tremble and stand in awe before the God of Daniel; for He is the living and everlasting God, and His kingdom is indestructible, and His dominion is without end. He delivers and saves, and works wonders and signs in heaven and on earth; He has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."[19]

And Daniel was held in great honor by King Darius above all others, and the king declared him his first friend. The three companions of Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael, were held in the same honor.

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus relates of Daniel that, as the first minister, he had great power in the Persian kingdom, and that in the city of Ecbatana[20] he built a famous tower, which in the time of the said historian, some several hundred years after its construction, still seemed new, as if it had just been built. In this tower the Median and Persian kings were buried, and its guarding was entrusted to one of the Jewish priests.

After King Darius, King Cyrus also held Holy Daniel in great honor, for he made him his confidant and an intermediary with the people.

19. The account of the feast of Belshazzar, of his perdition and the fall of the Babylonian kingdom is found in Dan. 5:1–31.

And Daniel lived together with the king and was more glorious than all his friends.

The Babylonians had an idol named Bel,[21] and on it they spent every day twenty great measures of wheaten flour, forty sheep and six measures of wine. The king honored it and went every day to worship it; but Daniel worshipped his God. And the king said to him:

"Why dost thou not worship Bel?"

He answered:

"Because I do not worship idols made by human hands, but worship the living God, who created heaven and earth and rules over all flesh."

The king said:

"Dost thou not think that Bel is a living God? Dost thou not see how much he eats and drinks every day?"

Daniel, smiling, said:

"Do not be deceived, O king; for he is clay within and bronze without, and he has never eaten or drunk anything."

Then the king, enraged, summoned his priests and said to them:

"If you do not tell me who consumes all this, you shall die. But if you prove to me that Bel consumes it, then Daniel shall die, because he has uttered blasphemy against Bel."

And Daniel said to the king:

"Be it according to thy word."

The priests of Bel were seventy, besides wives and children. The king came with Daniel into the temple of Bel, and the priests of Bel said:

"Behold, we will go out, and thou, O king, set out the food, and pour the wine, shut the doors and seal them with thy ring. And if tomorrow thou comest and findest that everything has not been eaten by Bel, then we shall die, or Daniel shall die, who has lied against us."

They paid no heed to this, for under the table they had made a hidden entrance, and through it they always came in and consumed the

20. Ecbatana — the principal city of Media and the summer residence of the Persian, and afterwards the Parthian, kings. The city was very ancient, renowned for its fortified citadel and for its extraordinary luxury.

21. Vil or Bel (Phoenician Baal) — names of the chief Babylonian sun god.

food. When they had gone out, the king set the food before Bel, and Daniel commanded his servants, and they brought ashes and scattered them over the whole temple in the presence of the king alone; and going out, they shut the doors, sealed them with the royal ring, and departed. But the priests, according to their custom, came in the night with their wives and children, and ate and drank everything.

On the next day the king rose early, and Daniel with him, and the king asked:

"Are the seals intact, Daniel?"

"They are intact, O king," he answered.

And as soon as the doors were opened, the king, looking at the table, cried out with a loud voice:

"Great art thou, Bel, and there is no deceit in thee!"

Daniel, smiling, restrained the king so that he should not enter within, and said:

"Look at the floor and notice whose footprints these are."

"I see the footprints of men, women and children," said the king. And enraged, the king commanded that the priests, their wives and children be seized, and they showed the hidden doors through which they had entered and eaten what was on the table. Then the king commanded them to be put to death, and gave Bel over to Daniel, and he destroyed it and its temple.[22]

In that same place there was a great dragon, and the Babylonians worshipped it.

And the king said to Daniel:

"Wilt thou not say of this one too that he is bronze? Behold, he is alive, and eats and drinks; thou canst not say that this god is not living; therefore worship him."

Daniel said:

"I worship the Lord my God, for He is the living God. But grant me leave, O king, and I will slay the dragon without sword or staff."

The king said:

"I grant it to thee."

22. The account of Bel and the dragon is found in Dan. 14:3–23; this account belongs to the non-canonical portions of the book.

Then Daniel took pitch, fat and hair, boiled them together, made of them a lump, and cast it into the dragon's mouth; and the dragon burst asunder. And Daniel said:

"Behold your holy things!"

When the Babylonians heard of it, they were greatly incensed and rose up against the king, and said:

"The king has become a Jew: Bel he has overthrown, the dragon he has slain, and the priests he has put to death."

And coming to the king, they said:

"Deliver Daniel to us, or we will put you and your house to death."

And when the king saw that they pressed him strongly, he was constrained to deliver Daniel to them. They cast him into the den of lions, and he remained there six days. In the den there were seven lions, and each day they were given two bodies and two sheep; but at this time they were not given this food, so that they might devour Daniel. But God, as before, closed the mouths of the lions, and Daniel sat among them in the den as among gentle lambs.

There was in Judea a prophet Habakkuk, who, having boiled a pottage and crumbled bread into a bowl, went out into the field to carry it to the reapers. But the Angel of the Lord said to Habakkuk:

"Carry this meal which thou hast to Babylon, to Daniel, into the den of lions."

Habakkuk said:

"Lord! I have never seen Babylon, and I do not know the den."

Then the Angel of the Lord took him by the crown of the head, and lifting him up by the hair, set him in Babylon over the den by the power of his Spirit. And Habakkuk cried out and said:

"Daniel! Daniel! Take the meal which God has sent thee."

Daniel said:

"Thou hast remembered me, O God, and hast not forsaken those who love Thee."

And Daniel rose and ate; and the Angel of God at once set Habakkuk back in his own place.

On the seventh day the king came to mourn for Daniel, and approaching the den, looked into it, and behold, Daniel was sitting there. And the king cried out with a loud voice and said:

"Great art Thou, O Lord God of Daniel, and there is none other beside Thee!"

And he commanded that Daniel be taken out, and that those who had plotted his destruction be cast into the den; and they were immediately devoured in his presence.[23]

Daniel and his three friends attained to a deep old age.

St. Cyril of Alexandria and certain others relate that after the death of Nebuchadnezzar and the other kings in whose favor Daniel and his companions had stood, another king reigned, named Cambyses.[24] Learning of their faith, and being rebuked by them for his impiety, he commanded that the head of Ananias be struck off first. Azariah, spreading out his garment, received it. The severed head of Azariah was received by Misael, and the head of Misael was received by Daniel, spreading out his garment. At last they struck off the head of Daniel also. It is said that after their beheading each head joined itself to its body, and the Angel of the Lord, taking the bodies of the saints, carried them to Mount Gebal,[25] and there they were laid beneath a stone. Four hundred years later, on the day of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, together with some others these also rose, and appearing to many, reposed again.[26] Their memory was appointed by the holy fathers to be celebrated seven days before the Nativity of Christ, because they too were of the tribe of Judah, from which our Savior also traces His descent, and thus in the flesh He is a kinsman of these saints.

By the prayers of these saints may Christ our God, to Whom be glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever, order our life in peace. Amen.[27]

23. The account of Daniel's six-day sojourn in the lions' den is found in Dan. 14:28–42.
24. Cambyses — king of Persia, son of Cyrus (529–522 B.C.), distinguished by cruelty.
25. Ebal — a mountain in the tribe of Ephraim, on the north side of the city of Shechem.
26. According to the testimony of the Evangelist Matthew, at the death of our Lord Jesus Christ "the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints that slept were raised, and coming out of the graves after His resurrection went into the holy city and appeared to many" (Mt. 27:52–53).

Troparion, Tone 2:

Great are the achievements of faith:[28] *in the furnace of flame, as upon waters of repose, the holy Three Youths rejoiced; and the Prophet Daniel appeared as a shepherd to the lions, as to sheep. By their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls.*

Kontakion of the Prophet, Tone 3:

Thy pure heart, illumined by the Spirit, became the most radiant abode of prophecy, for thou beholdest things far off as though present: thou didst tame the lions when cast into the den. Wherefore we honor thee, blessed Prophet Daniel, glorious one.

Kontakion of the Youths, Tone 6:

Not honoring the hand-made image, but protected by the uncircumscribed Being, ye thrice-blessed ones were glorified in the contest of fire, standing in the midst of the unbearable flame, and called upon God: Hasten, O merciful One, and come speedily to our help, for Thou art able to do whatever Thou willest.[29]

* * *

Memory of the Venerable Daniel the Confessor

Память преподобного Даниила Исповедника

The Venerable Daniel was at first the lord of an island named Niverta, otherwise Verroia, situated near Gades.[30] Making use of the fortunate position of his possession on the principal sea route of that time, Daniel acquired great wealth; but, as one brought up in Christian piety, he preferred to serve God rather than mammon and human desires (Mt. 6:24); and at last he renounced everything, counting

27. St. Empress Helena brought the relics of the Prophet Daniel to Constantinople and laid them near the church of St. Romanus. They were seen by the Russian pilgrims Antony in 1200, Stephen of Novgorod in 1342, the deacon Alexander in the 14th century and the hierodeacon Zosimas in 1420. His tomb is still shown in Susa, capital of the Persian kingdom; he is venerated even by the pagans.
28. Correction — success, feat.
29. The account of the miraculous deliverance of Daniel in the lions' den is found in Dan. 6.
30. Gadira — Cadiz in the south of Spain, near Gibraltar.

all things as refuse, that he might gain Christ (Phil. 3:8). He left power and property to his children, and himself withdrew to Rome and there received the monastic habit. From Rome he went to Constantinople, where he conversed with the emperors Romanus and Constantine,[31] from whom he asked leave to visit Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, after venerating the holy places, Daniel received from the patriarch there, Christodoulos,[32] the Great Schema with the name Stephen; but there he also had to endure much affliction and even blows from the impious Saracens. From there he went on to Egypt; here he was seized and thrown into prison, where he languished for six months, suffering hunger and thirst and every kind of hardship, with two priests imprisoned together with him. After that the blessed saint was brought before Amir of Egypt, who laid heavy fetters upon him and tried to compel him to renounce Christ; but the saint remained unshaken and, without hesitation, boldly confessed that our Lord Jesus Christ is the true God, for which he underwent many and various sufferings, and from exhaustion caused by them he died. Daniel received foreknowledge of his end from God.

* * *

NOTES

8449. Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon (from 607 to 564 B.C.), one of the most famous conquerors of whom history speaks. He defeated the army of the Egyptian king Pharaoh Necho and put an end to Egyptian power in Asia (Jer. 45:2; 4 Kgdms. 24:7). Then he turned his attention to his tributary, the king of Judah, Jehoiakim. After a brief siege, taking Jerusalem, he left Jehoiakim as king, making him his tributary; he took part of the vessels from the temple and sent them to Babylon, and also ordered beautiful and gifted youths of royal and princely lineage to be chosen and transported to Babylon, to be educated there for service at court. And since Jehoiakim, after three years, renounced submission to him, he again made an attack on Judea and transported from it more than three thousand Jews (597 B.C.), and in the following year took the king himself (Zedekiah) captive and put him in fetters (2 Chr. 36:6).

8450. Babylon, one of the most ancient cities of the world; it was built by Nimrod, son of Cush, a descendant of Ham, who made this city the capital of his kingdom (Gen.

31. Romanus I Lecapenus — Byzantine emperor 917–944. Constantine VII — Byzantine emperor 912–959, who reigned simultaneously with Romanus.
32. Christopher or Christodoulos was Patriarch of Jerusalem from 947 to 967.

10:6–10). From the name of this city the whole land was called Babylonian or Babylonia. It is also called the land of the Chaldeans (Jer. 24:5; Ezek. 12:13), from the ruling tribe of the Chaldeans, who had long before come here from the north, from the mountains of Armenia, and had given their name to this land. This land lay in the fertile Shinar plain, in the basin of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. Babylon was situated here on both sides of the Euphrates, 15 miles from Baghdad, 40 from the Persian Gulf and 130 from Jerusalem. Riches flowed into Babylon from all sides, and thus it belonged to the greatest, most famous and richest cities of the East. After the death of Nebuchadnezzar, the kingdom of Babylon quickly began to decline. Today only ruins remain on the site of ancient Babylon.

8456. Enchanters (Russian: *taynovedtsy*, "knowers of secrets"), magi (Russian: *gadateli*, "diviners"), sorcerers, Chaldeans. These are various names for wise men possessing high and wide learning, especially knowledge of the hidden powers of nature, of sacred writings (hieroglyphs), and also in the fields of astronomy and medicine. Their chief occupations were the study of nature, observation of heavenly phenomena, interpretation of dreams, and divination of the future; at the same time most of them were also priests. Such were the magi contemporary with Joseph (Gen. 41:8) and Moses (Ex. 7:11), and the magi who came to worship Jesus Christ (Mt. 2:1–2). To these may also be referred Balaam (Num. 22:5) and Simon (Acts 8:1). Many of them were wise men and learned in the best sense of the word, and some were even at times vouchsafed special revelations from God, as, for example, Balaam and the magi who came to worship Jesus Christ; while others undoubtedly joined to their scholarly pursuits the base craft of magic, sorcery, incantation, various deceptions and the like. For this reason, presumably, they are also called, among other things, enchanters and sorcerers.

8458. By the fourth kingdom one should understand the Syro-Egyptian kingdom. The context of the speech gives grounds to understand here that kingdom which in historical order followed the Macedonian and preceded the Messianic kingdom, and such was the Syro-Egyptian. The Macedonian kingdom, as is known, after the death of its founder Alexander the Great, fell apart into four: the Syrian, the Thracian, the Macedonian and the Egyptian. These kingdoms, separated one from another, existed in parallel with one another, like the legs of a statue, never joined together. To this feature of the fourth kingdom the impossibility of uniting iron with clay also points. Another feature indicated by the prophet, which comes closest to the Syro-Egyptian kingdom, is the special hostility of this kingdom toward the people of God (Dan. 7:21–25, 11:28). Indeed, history shows that the malice of the pagan kings toward the Jews reached particular bitterness during the period of dependence on the Syrian and Egyptian kings. Especially hostile was the Syrian kingdom, and of its kings, Antiochus Epiphanes.

8470. A similar anthropomorphic representation of the invisible, impartial and terrible Judgment of God upon sinners is found also in the Apocalypse of St. John the Theologian (Rev. 4:1–4 and others). The clearest and most precise Messianic prophecy is contained in the third prophetic vision of Daniel (Dan. 9:1–27) concerning the 70 weeks, which were to pass from the time of the decree for the rebuilding of the second temple (in 453 B.C.) until the appearance of Christ and the accomplishment by Him of the New

Covenant. According to the sense of the explanation given to Daniel by the Archangel Gabriel, from the time of the decree of Cyrus there must pass 7 weeks until the building of the temple; after the following 62 weeks the Anointed One will be killed, the New Covenant will be established, and sacrifices will be abolished, and then the abomination of desolation will stand in the holy place. The features by which this Anointed One is outlined here fully befit Jesus Christ (Cf. Dan. 7:24–27 with Acts 20:43; Lk. 3:24; Mt. 11:16; Lk. 24:25–27, 21:20). By the weeks one can understand only weeks of years; for only with such an understanding of them will there be full correspondence between the prophecies of Daniel and later history. Precisely the first 7 weeks correspond to 49 years, which passed from the decree of Cyrus until the completion of the building of the city and temple of Jerusalem; the following 62 weeks — to 434 years, which in combination with the 49 years of the first seven weeks — 483 years — correspond fully to the period before the appearance of Jesus Christ to the work of serving the human race, in the 15th year of Tiberius. According to the prophecy, the killing of Christ was to take place in the middle of the last week, that is, 3½ years after that appearance, as in fact it did according to the account of the Evangelists. After this half-week the abomination of desolation was to come upon the holy place, that is, the destruction of Jerusalem, which in turn, pointing to the words of Daniel, was also foretold by the Savior (Mt. 24:15); and so indeed all this was accomplished at the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and Vespasian.



THE EIGHTEENTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 18

18 декабря

New Calendar December 18 · Old Calendar December 31 (civil dates)

Life and Passion of the Holy Martyr Sebastian and His Companions

Житие и страдание святого мученика Севастиана и дружины его

Saint Sebastian was born in the city of Narbonne,[1] and received his upbringing and learning in Mediolanum.[2] The impious emperors Diocletian and Maximian[3] so loved him that they entrusted to him the command of the palace guard and ordered him always to stand before them, for he was a man brave and wise, full of wisdom, truthful in speech, just in judgment, far-sighted in counsel, faithful and courageous in service and in all the affairs entrusted to him, and he stood out above all for his virtue and integrity. His soldiers honored him as a father, and all the courtiers loved and respected him greatly, for he was distinguished by true piety. As was fitting, whomever God enriched with His gifts, all men loved and honored! At all times he diligently labored for Christ, prayed, and kept His holy commandments. Yet he did all this in secret, so that the impious emperors would not learn of his faith in Christ. He concealed within himself, beneath the appearance of earthly power, a soldier of Christ, not because he feared torments or loved honors and riches and dreaded losing them, but only so that he might help the Christians, who at that time were cruelly persecuted and

1. Narbo – now Narbonne – a flourishing, commercial city of the ancient Gauls, afterwards (at the beginning of the 2nd century) become a Roman colony, in south-eastern Gaul on the river Atax; now a fairly insignificant city of France, not far from the Gulf of Lyon, on the canal of the same name connecting the Mediterranean Sea with the Atlantic Ocean.
2. Mediolanum – now Milan – a considerable city of ancient Cisalpine Gaul, or of present-day northern Italy.
3. Diocletian and Maximian – co-emperors of the Roman Empire, who reigned from 284 to 305.

tormented. Those of them whom he could not win release from their bonds and tortures, or whose sufferings he could not ease, he strengthened, counseling and persuading them to lay down their lives bravely for the Lord, by whose Blood they had been redeemed, and to shed their blood, in hope of an eternal reward after temporal torments. Thus he strove to win for God souls which the devil wished to tear away from Him and seize for himself, in order to destroy them. He acted according to the word of Scripture: he strengthened the hands that hung down and the feeble knees of the faithful (cf. Is. 35:3–4), and he confirmed the faint-hearted, the doubting and those fearing torments in courage through exhortation and roused them to struggle. Seeing before him many saints who had contended in the good contest, endured sufferings, kept the faith of Christ amid cruel tortures, and received, after their departure from this life, the crowns of eternal life, Sebastian himself burned with the desire to suffer for Christ and waited for the Lord to indicate a suitable time for it. And at last the hour came when he could no longer conceal the fire of divine love and zeal burning within him, and he declared to all who he was: a light could not remain hidden in darkness any longer.

At that time two honorable and noble men, Marcellinus and Marcus, own brothers, had been taken for confessing the name of Christ and had long sat in prison; the blessed Sebastian often came to them and comforted them, conversing about the holy faith and persuading them to renounce transient earthly goods and not to fear torments. They obeyed his sound counsel, bravely bore the wounds inflicted on them by their tormentors, and, remaining unshaken in the faith, were condemned to be beheaded by the sword. But at the very moment when they, ready to die, bowed their heads beneath the sword, an order came to release them to return home to their parents, wives and children. Their aged parents, Tranquillinus and Marcia, were still alive. And both the parents and all the household asked the Roman governor Agrestes Chromatius to prolong the lives of Marcellinus and Marcus by thirty days, during which time they might persuade these brothers and bring them to worship the pagan gods, for their parents, their wives and all their relatives were pagans.

When the requested time had been granted, parents, wives, children, relatives and friends surrounded Marcellinus and Marcus, and with weeping began to beg them to spare themselves and them, and, abandoning their intention, to do what was pleasing to the emperors. The father, pointing to his gray hair, his old age and bodily infirmity, asked that they not change their faith before his death, and that they bury him according to custom; he was already expecting a speedy death and could not walk by himself, but was always supported or carried by others. The mother, pointing to the breast with which she had nursed them, demanded from them due honor and filial obedience, and begged them to spare their lives for her sake and not to give themselves over to voluntary death. The little children stretched out their hands to them, fell at their feet, and with tears begged them not to leave them orphans. The other children, who were still in swaddling clothes and could not yet speak, by their very appearance recalled the state of orphanhood and stirred pity in the parents. The wives spoke of their widowhood and, shedding hot tears, implored them not to destroy them along with themselves by choosing death, subjecting them to the various calamities of a widow's life. The kinsfolk urged them not to inflict such dishonor on their house and their whole family, and such humiliation from their neighbors, by surrendering themselves to a shameful death. And all wept and lamented. And what remained for those men, invincible in their holy boldness? No torment could have shaken them as these temptations did; natural love for aged parents, wives, children and relatives overcame them, pity crushed them; and they began to doubt and waver, like a reed in the wind, and to melt in heart, like wax before fire. They themselves wept together with their kinsfolk and were already nearly ready to yield to their entreaties and renounce the holy faith.

Then Saint Sebastian, who was present there at that time, seeing that they were ready to renounce the faith and ruin their souls, had pity on them, and, recognizing that the time had come for his own confession as well, both to help others and to go himself to the struggle of suffering, he stood up in the midst of those present, and, bidding everyone be silent, began to speak:

– O valiant warriors of Christ! O most skillful soldiers of God's army! Behold, through your greatness of soul you have already manfully drawn near to triumph, and now, because of the impious entreaties of those near to you, you would lay aside the eternal crown. Do not do this, but teach the warriors of Christ courage by your struggle; teach them to arm themselves more with faith than with iron. Do not cast aside the banner of your victories for the sake of women's tears, nor give respite to the enemy's head, which lies beneath your feet, lest, having regained his strength, he begin the fight against you again; for if his former rising against you was fierce, when provoked anew he will come in even greater fury.

Raise, therefore, above earthly attachments the glorious standard of your struggle, and do not abandon it for useless childish tears. Those whom you see weeping would now rejoice if they knew what you know, for they think that life exists only on earth, and that when it ends and the body dies, not a single part of the soul will remain alive. If they knew that there is another life, immortal and free from pain, in which unceasing joy reigns, they would surely wish to enter it with you and, despising this temporal life, would strive to obtain the eternal one.

The present life passes swiftly and is so fickle and untrustworthy that even those who are attached to it lose faith in it. From the beginning of the world it has brought ruin upon all who hoped in it, deceived those who desired it, mocked all who took pride in it, lied to everyone, left no one steadfast in hope or unashamed in expectation, and proved itself utterly deceitful. O, if only this deception existed merely in a dream and did not in truth lead people into bitter delusions! Worse still, this temporal life leads its adherents into every kind of lawlessness: it delights gluttons with overeating and drunkenness, draws the wanton into fornication and every defilement, teaches the thief to steal and the irritable to give way to anger, the liar to deceive. It separates husband and wife, sows enmity among friends, quarrels among the meek, injustice among the just, and scandal in the midst of monastics. It takes justice from judges, chastity from the pure, skill from craftsmen, and good morals

from all.

Let us recall also the most savage deeds into which it leads its adherents: when a brother kills his brother, or a son his father, or a friend murders a friend—who teaches them to do this? What do they hope for when they commit such lawlessness? Is it not for the sake of this life, so greatly beloved, that people hate one another, each striving to secure a better existence for himself? Why does a robber kill a traveler, a rich man oppress a poor man, a proud man wrong the humble, and a guilty man persecute the innocent? Truly, all these evils are done by those who serve the present life, wishing to remain in love with it and enjoy it for a long time. Yet, by teaching evil to its adherents and servants, it delivers them to its daughter, eternal death. Into this death the first men were also cast, for although they had been created to receive eternal life, they were deceived by temporal life and served gluttony, sensuality, and the lust of the eyes (1 Jn. 2:16); thus they fell into hell, taking with them none of the goods of the earth.

And this earthly life, beloved friends, so deceives you that you would, by your unrighteous counsels, turn your friends back to it, though they are going toward eternal life! It teaches you, honored parents, to draw your sons away by your senseless lamentations, though they are going to the heavenly army, to incorruptible glory, and to the mercy of the Eternal King. It persuades you, chaste wives of the saints, to corrupt the minds of the martyrs with your caresses, to turn them away from their good purpose, and to persuade them to accept eternal death instead of life, and slavery instead of freedom.

If they follow your counsel, they will live with you only a little while; afterward they must part from you—and part in such a way that you will not be able to see one another except in the place of eternal torment, where flame consumes the souls of the unbelieving, where infernal serpents devour the mouths of blasphemers, where asps rend the breasts of idolaters, where bitter weeping, heavy sighs, and unceasing lamentation are heard amid torments. Let them escape these torments,

then, and strive yourselves to be delivered from them. Do not hinder them from going once more toward the heavenly crown prepared for them. Do not be afraid: they will not be parted from you, but, on the contrary, will prepare for you bright dwellings in heaven, where you, together with them and your children, will enjoy eternal blessings.

If you delight here in beautiful buildings, how much more will you delight in the beauty of those heavenly dwellings, where tables shine with pure gold, halls are made of precious stones, adorned with pearls and radiant with glory; where gardens bloom forever with unfading flowers, fruitful fields are watered by sweet streams, the air is ever temperate, and the living breeze fills the senses with indescribable fragrances; where the day never wanes, the light never sets, and joy never passes away. There are no sighs, no weeping, no sorrow, nor any imperfection; nothing sinful is seen, no foul odor is perceived, no sad, mournful, or dreadful voice is heard. There only beauty is seen, all that is fragrant is smelled, and only joyful sounds are heard. There the choirs of Angels and Archangels sing without ceasing, in harmony glorifying the Immortal King.[4]

How can such a life be despised, while one clings to the temporal life? For the sake of riches? But they soon vanish. Let those who wish to possess them forever listen to what their riches proclaim to them: "You love us so much," they say, "as though you would never be parted from us. When you are dying, we cannot go with you; while you are alive, however, we can accompany you, if only you command us, or send us ahead of you. Let the usurious lender and the diligent farmer be examples to you: the first lends a man gold in order to receive twice as much from him; the second sows various seeds in the earth in order to reap a hundredfold. The debtor repays his lender twice the gold, and

4. Paradise is depicted with such figurative features also in the liturgical hymns, in other Menaion readings (for example, the visions of Paradise of St. Andrew the Fool-for-Christ) and in the works of the holy fathers of the Church, for example Ephraim the Syrian, who adds that all these features and images of paradisiacal bliss, bearing the character of sensory descriptions, must be understood in a spiritual sense, and that future blessedness cannot be described in human language and is inaccessible to human senses and earthly sensations.

the earth returns the sower's grain a hundredfold. Will not God multiply your riches many times over, if only you entrust them to Him? Send your treasures there, and strive yourselves to come there.

"What profit is there in this temporal life? If someone were to live even 100 years, when the last day comes, would it not seem to him that all the years gone by and all the pleasures of life had never been? Does there not remain from them only some recollection, like the traces left by a traveler who stayed with us for one day? Truly, only a foolish man, who has not known the true blessings, can fail to love the more beautiful life to come! Truly, only an unwise man can fear to lose this fleeting life in order to gain eternal life, in which pleasures, riches, and joy will begin, never to end, but to endure forever.

"Whoever does not wish to serve eternal life loses this temporal life in vain, receives eternal death, and remains bound in hell, where there is unquenchable fire, constant sorrow, and everlasting torments; where evil spirits dwell, whose arms are serpents' heads, whose eyes send forth fiery darts, whose teeth are as large as those of elephants, and whose bites are like the sting of a scorpion. Their voices are like the roaring of lions, and their very appearance inspires great terror, brings fierce pain, and causes the bitterest death. Is it not dreadful to die amid such horrors and torments? Yet more dreadful is this: they live in order to die without ceasing; they do not decay in order to suffer without end; they remain whole in order to be devoured forever by serpents; and the limbs that have been eaten are renewed again, to serve as food for poisonous serpents and sleepless worms."

O friends, O parents, O glorious wives of the saints! Do not desire to bring this holy pair down from endless life into such fearful eternal death; do not turn them away from joy to lamentation; do not counsel them to go from light into darkness; do not call them from sweet rest to bitter torment.

O holy pair, Marcellinus and Marcus! Do not let yourselves be seduced by the crafty enemy, who tempts you in this way through your

household. Do not cast yourselves into endless torment, do not surrender yourselves into the hands of demons, and do not be enticed by love of temporal life, the beauties of the visible world, and the vain pleasures of this life. Do not let yourselves be overcome by the entreaties of your parents, the weeping of your wives, the tears of your children, or the caresses of your kin and friends. Remember the words of the Lord: "A man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Mt. 10:36). They who separate us from God are not our friends but our enemies, and their love for us is not true but false, for they deprive us of so great a good; they take from us the love of God and the Kingdom of Heaven, prepared for those who love God. Do not allow yourselves to let slip from your hands the reward for which you have labored so much, for already you hold in your hands, as it were, the good that has been prepared for you; you already stand at the doors of the heavenly hall. Behold, now the crowns are already woven for you, and Christ, the Author of your contest, waits to crown you and to glorify you before the holy Angels. Behold, the end of your course has now come: do not look back, like the wife of Lot, lest you become a lifeless pillar (Gen. 19:26), for thereby you would destroy your souls. Do not be seduced by too strong a love for parents, wives and children, lest you become unworthy of Christ, who said: "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Mt. 10:37). Do not be so unwise as to begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh (cf. Gal. 3:3). Oh, may my God Christ grant me to shed my blood for Him before you, that you may see my suffering, and that my death may serve you as an example of how to lay down one's soul for your God and mine.

When holy Sebastian had instructed them with such and many other admonitions, suddenly the Divine Light shone upon him, and his face was illumined like the face of an Angel, so that the unbelievers were frightened by the glory of his countenance. Some saw seven Angels clothing the Blessed Sebastian in bright raiment, and a Most Beautiful Youth blessing him, with the words:

"You shall always be with Me."

All this took place in the house of the protoscriniarius[5] named Nicostratus, in whose custody Marcellinus and Marcus were held. The wife of Nicostratus, named Zoe, who had already been mute for six years from a severe illness, but whose mind and hearing were unharmed, heard and understood everything said by Sebastian, and, seeing the radiance around his face, fell at his feet, entreating him by signs to loose her tongue. The Blessed Sebastian said:

"If I am truly a true servant of Christ, and if everything this woman has heard from me and believed is true, then may my Lord command her mouth to be opened and her tongue to be loosed, as once He did for the prophet Zacharias, the father of John the Forerunner (Lk. 1:64)."

Having said this, he made the sign of the Cross over the woman's lips, and she at once spoke aloud:

"Blessed are you, and blessed is the word spoken by you, and blessed are they who believe in Christ, the Son of the Living God, through you, for I saw an Angel come down to you from heaven, holding before you an open book, from which you read all that you said. Blessed are those who believe all that you have said, and let all who doubt even one word heard from you be accursed. As the rising dawn drives away darkness and gives light to the eyes, so the light of your words has dispelled the gloom of my ignorance and blindness, has illumined me with the bright day of true faith, and after six years of muteness has opened my lips to praise God."

Seeing such a miracle, all who were present believed in Christ. Nicostratus, the husband of Zoe, seeing such power of Christ, also fell at the feet of the saint, asking forgiveness for having, by the command of the emperor, held Marcellinus and Marcus in chains; and, removing the iron fetters from their hands, he embraced their knees, begged them to go free, and said:

"Oh, if only I could be so blessed as to suffer bonds for your deliverance! Having shed my blood for you, I would wash away my sins, and,

5. Protoscriniarius – a court treasurer, who had great power with the eparch (ruler of a province), for which reason he was accorded special imperial confidence and entrusted with various responsible duties.

escaping eternal death, I would receive that life of which God has graciously willed to speak to us through the lips of Sebastian."

When Nicostratus asked the saints to go to their homes, they said to him:

"We do not wish to leave you the cup of our suffering. Our Lord Christ is generous and merciful, for He grants His heavenly mercy to all who come to Him and ask of Him; He is able to make you also worthy of the same cup, if you sincerely desire it. For if to you, who did not believe, the light of knowledge of the truth was given, how much more now, when you have believed, will whatever you ask be granted, for the grace of God is always ready to give people the help they ask for, especially to those who believe in Him without any doubt. Your faith began with today's instruction, and in a single hour you have learned what scarcely anyone could learn in a whole year; and nothing, as we see, holds you back, in faith in our Lord, from being ready to die for Him: neither parents, nor children, nor riches. Suddenly you have scorned what you always loved, and you seek what you never knew; you have gone along an unknown path and at once have come to Christ, and your desires are already directed toward heaven, since you seek no consolation on earth. How greatly praiseworthy is this deed! How worthy of imitation is such an example of virtue! You have not yet been united with Christ by the water of baptism, you have not yet seen the beginning of the war, and already you lift up arms for the True King, and, freeing His soldiers from their bonds, you become prisoners yourselves, and you do not fear to give yourselves up to death for the condemned."

All were moved in their hearts and wept, repenting of their former ignorance and of having wished to turn the soldiers of Christ from the good contest. Marcus said:

"Learn, beloved parents, and you, wives, and you, friends! Learn to resist the enemy bravely, taking up the shield of faith, with which you can quench the fiery darts of the wicked one (Eph. 6:16). Let the servants of the devil rise up and arm themselves against us; let them torment our bodies with whatever tortures they wish: they can kill the body, but they are not able to overcome the soul that wars for the faith. Let us not pay attention to the slaughter and mangling of the body:

wounds received for the king bring glory to soldiers. The devil rages against us with a wrath that torments himself, for he too is tormented, seeing our endurance; he inflicts on us various sufferings and threatens us with diverse deaths, so as by terror to tear us away from the good contest. Where torments do not succeed, he acts by flattery: he promises life in order to take away life; he promises riches in order to bring us to poverty; he gives glory in order to fill us with shame; he promises a carefree life in order to cast us, instead, into misery and eternal sorrow. Such are the stratagems of his attacks, such are his treacherous intentions: to spare the body from torments, but to kill the soul with sins. Let us go against him, then: let us despise the flesh in order to help the soul. Why should we fear temporal death, if we hope to live forever? Why grieve for this life, when we hope to obtain a better one? Let those fear death who do not hope to see the life to come. Oh, how many servants of this life have been destroyed by unexpected accident: either lightning has struck them, or the sea has drowned them, a chasm has swallowed them, a sword has slain them! And these unhappy ones lost this life with sorrow, and did not gain another! Let them then weep for this life, let them tremble at death; but what sorrow is death to us? What concern for this life have we who await the eternal blessed life prepared for us by Christ, full of good things never seen by eyes, never heard by human ear, and beyond the grasp of the mind?"

When holy Marcus spoke thus, all were filled with desire for the life to come, and began to loathe the present life; all were kindled with love for Christ, and began to hate the world, and they thanked God that He had illumined their darkness, opened their spiritual eyes, and delivered them from perdition by showing them the way of salvation. Thus those who had come to turn the holy martyrs away from Christ were themselves converted to Christ, and those who hoped to destroy others were saved themselves. Nicostratus with his wife earnestly besought the saint, saying:

"I will neither eat nor drink until the mystery of the Christian faith is performed over me."

"Change your service," Sebastian answered, "and begin to serve more as a protoscriniarius of Christ than as a prefect. Heed my counsel:

gather all whom you have in chains and in prisons, and I will summon a priest of God, and you, together with all who have believed, shall be made worthy by him of the holy mysteries. If the devil strives to tear the holy servants of Christ away from Him, how much more ought we to be concerned that, having torn from the devil those whom he wishes to destroy, we turn them to our Creator!"

Nicostratus objected:

"Can the holy mystery be bestowed on villains and criminals condemned to death?"

Sebastian answered:

"Our Savior came into the world for the sake of us sinners, and bestowed the mystery of baptism, by which sins and iniquities are taken away from men and Divine grace is granted. At the very beginning of your conversion, offer this gift to Christ, take care for the salvation of others, and there will be given to you as reward the crown of martyrdom, woven from the unfading flowers of many virtues."

Having heard this, Nicostratus went to the commentarisius[6] Claudius and ordered him to send to his house all the condemned men and those held in chains. When all this had been done and the prisoners, bound with iron, had gathered, St. Sebastian addressed them with a word of instruction and salvation, and finding them prepared for the Christian faith and capable of receiving the grace of God, he ordered that all be freed from their bonds. He then went to the presbyter St. Polycarp, who was concealing his rank because of the persecution, and told him everything that had taken place. Giving thanks to God for this, St. Polycarp went with Sebastian to the house of Nicostratus, and turning to the whole assembly of the faithful, said:

– Blessed are all of you who have heard the word of our Lord Jesus Christ, saying: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mt. 11:28–30). And you,

6. Commentarisius – the head over prisons in the Roman Empire and the clerk in judicial proceedings, who conducted preliminary investigations of the accused, especially of the Christian martyrs.

brethren, whom the water of baptism shall wash and, having sanctified you, make beloved sons of God, must repent, that you may receive forgiveness of your former sins. Now, since you display such zeal for Christ our God that, believing in Him, you are ready to die for Him, and since you who at first wished to turn others away from it now desire it yourselves, you have already received forgiveness and the victory over the invisible enemy. Christ our Lord is mighty: He brings light out of darkness, and out of rejected vessels He makes chosen ones. Thus He made Paul out of Saul, an Apostle out of an apostate, and a teacher out of a persecutor. So today He has called you out of paganism into His Church, made faithful servants out of unbelievers, and His friends out of His enemies. Over your conversion weeps and wails the whole host of demons, the sons of darkness; but all the choirs of the holy heavenly Angels, the sons of light, rejoice and exult at your enlightenment. Therefore let each of you write down his name and give it to me. Let baptism be preceded by a fast: fast until evening, and when the material light sets, the immaterial light will shine upon you in baptism.

All were filled with joy, and each began to prepare for baptism. While all this was going on, the commentarisius Claudius came to the house of Nicostratus and summoned him to the eparch, saying:

– Having learned that you have gathered all the prisoners into your house, the eparch has become angry and has ordered you summoned. Think how you will answer him.

Nicostratus, when he came to the eparch's house and the eparch asked him about the prisoners, answered:

– By your excellency's command I have taken into custody in my house two Christians, Marcellinus and Marcus, and, to frighten them the more, I have joined to them other prisoners who are heavily fettered and tightly bound, so that, seeing them, they might expect the same suffering for themselves and thus obey your command.

The chief praised him and dismissed him, saying:

– You will receive a great reward from their parents if, having through you come to unity of mind, they are released with us whole and sound.

Returning home with Claudius, Nicostratus began to tell him about St. Sebastian: that he is a friend of the emperor, a Christian, skilled in the divine teaching, strengthens Christian hearts in the faith, and calls the present life temporary and rapidly perishing, but after death proclaims another life, better and eternal. Then he related how Sebastian's face was lit with heavenly light, and how he had healed his wife of six years' muteness, so that she began to speak clearly. Hearing this from Nicostratus, Claudius said:

– My two young sons are very ill: one has dropsy, and the other has sores over his whole body. I beg him to heal my sons. I do not doubt that he who loosed your wife's muteness can heal my children as well.

Having said this, Claudius hastened to his house, took both children in his arms, and went with them to the house of Nicostratus. There he fell at the feet of the holy servants of God, Sebastian and Polycarp, saying:

– I believe without any doubt, with all my heart, that Christ, whom you worship, is the true God. I have brought these sick children of mine here so that you may save them from death!

The divine men said to him:

– All who have any sickness will receive healing today, at the very moment they enter the holy font.

Claudius again declared that he believed in Christ and wished to be a Christian. All of them began to prepare for holy baptism, wrote down their names, and handed them to the presbyter. The first to hand in his name was Tranquillinus, father of Marcellinus and Marcus, after him six of his friends: Ariston, Crescentian, Eutychian, Urban, Vitalis and Just; then Nicostratus with his brother Castorius, and Claudius the commentarisius, after him his two sons Symphorian and Felix, Marcia, the mother of Marcellinus and Marcus, Symphorosa, the wife of Claudius, Zoe, the wife of Nicostratus, and the whole household of Nicostratus, up to 33 souls of both sexes, and finally all those brought from the prison, sixteen in number. The total of those prepared for baptism was 64 persons, and all were baptized by St. Polycarp. St. Sebastian was the sponsor at the font; for the women the sponsors were Beatrice and Lucina. First of all the children of Claudius were brought

into the font, and at once they were healed of their sicknesses, so that no trace of their former sores remained on their bodies. After them they brought Tranquillinus. He was not only feeble with age but also afflicted with rheumatism in his hands and feet, so that he could scarcely be carried in people's arms; he suffered greatly when his clothes were taken off him before baptism. St. Polycarp asked him:

– Do you believe, without doubting, that the Only-begotten Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, has the power to give you health and to forgive your sins?

Tranquillinus answered:

– I believe that Christ is the Son of God and God who can do all things, but from His goodness I seek only the forgiveness of sins; as for bodily illness, I do not concern myself with it.

All who stood around wept with joy and prayed the Lord to show the fruit of the martyr's faith. When the baptism began and Tranquillinus was asked: "Do you believe in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?" and he answered: "I believe," then before the word had left his lips, the bonds of sickness were loosed from his hands and feet, his soles and knees were strengthened, all the feebleness of age departed from him, and he was renewed, "your youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Ps. 102:5),[7] and he cried out:

– Thou art the one true God, whom this wretched world does not know!

After him all the others were baptized one by one. And during the sixteen days that remained of the time granted to Marcellinus and Marcus, both day and night they glorified God with church hymns and psalms, were established in the faith, and prepared themselves for the martyr's exploit for the name of Christ.

When the thirty-day term was drawing to its end, the eparch of the city of Rome, Agrestius Chromatius, summoned Tranquillinus, father

7. The expression of Ps. 102:5. – By this expression is shown here that the elder Tranquillinus, after confessing the faith of Christ, became strong and vigorous, like a youth. The comparison of this renewal with the renewal of the eagle may be grounded in the eagle's longevity, keen sight, strength, and height of flight.

of Marcellinus and Marcus, and asked him about his sons: whether they had agreed to renounce Christianity.

Tranquillinus answered:

– I cannot find words to thank you for your kindnesses. If your excellency, in your gentleness, had not stayed and postponed for so many days the death sentence of my sons, I would have lost them, and my sons would have lost their father. All our kinsmen, loving friends, and, I think, your excellency too will rejoice with me, for the dead have been given life, joy has returned to the sorrowful, and gladness to the sad.

Then the eparch, thinking that Tranquillinus' sons wished to worship the gods, said:

– Come on the last day, and let your sons offer the due incense to the gods.

Hearing this, Tranquillinus said:

– O most illustrious man! If you would judge justly concerning what has happened to me and my sons, you could understand how great and mighty is the name of Christian.

The eparch said:

– Are you raving, Tranquillinus?

– Until now I have been raving both in body and in soul, answered Tranquillinus, but as soon as I believed in Christ, I at once received health of soul and body.

– As I see, said the eparch, I did not postpone the execution for your sons so that you might turn them from their error, but so that they might draw you into their error!

Tranquillinus answered:

– I beg your excellency to judge which deeds ought to be called error.

The eparch said:

– Tell me yourself what ought to be called error.

– The first error, answered Tranquillinus, consists in leaving the path of life and walking the path of death.

– And which is the path of death? asked the eparch.

– Do you not think, answered Tranquillinus, that the path of death is to give the name of gods to mortal men and to worship images of them made of wood and stone?

The eparch objected:

– Are not those whom we worship gods?

Tranquillinus answered:

Truly, one should not consider as gods those of whom your own books write that they were born in sins, had unrighteous, wicked and lawless parents, lived themselves unrighteously, lawlessly and deceitfully, and died in sins. Was there not a God in heaven even before the time when Cronus, who devoured the flesh of his own sons, reigned over the Cretans? Or did Crete have its king while heaven had no God? Those are greatly mistaken who think that Zeus, son of Cronus, who was a man under the power of malice and carnal lust, possesses thunder and hurls lightning. Whom did he not persecute, if he did not spare even his own father, and with what sins did he not defile himself, if he took his own sister as his wife? In the marketplaces, in the streets, in the houses and everywhere it is spoken of and related in the books how the impious Hera boasts of being both sister and wife of Zeus.[8493] Do you not believe, most illustrious man, that you are mistaken in honoring gods filled with such wickedness, for which Roman laws condemn a man to execution and death? Yet you honor such beings, and, forsaking the Almighty God who reigns in heaven, you say to a stone: "Thou art my god," and to a tree: "Help me!"

The eparch said:

Since men began to revile the gods and to turn away from their worship, the Roman empire has been subjected to many calamities.

That is not so, said Tranquillinus. Read 10 books of Livy,[8] and you will learn that on a single day more than 42,000 men of the Roman army, which was offering sacrifice to demons, perished. Is it a secret to you that the Franks took the Capitol and mocked Roman power?[9] Formerly, when people had not yet begun to know the true God, the

8. Here Titus Livius is meant, the greatest Roman historian of the late first century B.C. and the early first century A.D. His history consists of 142 books, of which only 35 have come down to us.

city of Rome suffered many calamities, unheard-of captivities and various murders; but now, when the faithful worship the invisible true God, the Roman kingdom abides in tranquility and is not put to shame, because God, for the sake of His chosen ones, has protected it with peace. Yet you do not acknowledge so merciful a God, and you ascribe all the benefactions sent by the Creator to His creature!

Thus, during their conversation, talk turned to Christ Jesus, and Tranquillinus told how and for what purpose the Son of God came down to earth without leaving heaven and took on flesh in order to save the human soul from perdition. And all that Tranquillinus himself had learned from the holy Sebastian and Polycarp, and what he had been further instructed in by the grace of the Lord, which admonishes the believing man, he related to the eparch. The Lord Himself helped him to speak and granted him a wisdom to which his opponent could make no reply. He also related how, having long suffered from severe pains in his hands and feet, he was suddenly healed by the grace of Christ at the very moment when he believed in Him with all his heart. The eparch, who had long suffered from severe pain in his legs, ordered those present to take Tranquillinus away, as if to interrogate him the next day; but at night he secretly sent for him, summoned him to himself, and, offering him gifts, asked him to name the remedy by which he had been healed. Tranquillinus said:

Let your honor know that our God is greatly angered at those who wish to sell or buy His grace. If you wish to be healed of your sickness, believe in Christ the Son of God, and you will be healed, as you see me healed, for I suffered even when I was carried about, and all my sinews and joints were bound for eleven years by an indescribable sickness, so that other people had to put food to my lips. But when I believed in Christ God, I immediately received healing, and now I am whole and well by the grace of my true Savior.

The eparch said:

9. The Capitol was the inner citadel of Rome. By the Franks are meant the Gauls who inhabited Cisalpine Gaul (Northern Italy). The invasion of the Gauls took place in the second half of the fourth century B.C. and ended at first in the complete defeat of the Romans and the devastation of the Roman republic, from which it could not recover for a long time.

I beg you, bring to me the one who was the mediator of your recovery; if he gives me healing, I too shall become a Christian.

Tranquillinus at once went and summoned the holy Polycarp. The holy Sebastian was also summoned, and he taught the eparch Agrestius Chromatius and his son Tiburtius the holy faith in the Lord Christ, and he broke more than 200 idols that were in his house: the wooden ones he burned, the stone ones he smashed, and the gold and silver ones he cut into pieces and gave to the poor.

While the idols were being broken and shattered, a radiant youth appeared to the eparch and said:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom you have believed, has sent me to grant health to all your members.

At once Chromatius felt himself healthy and quickly rose, wishing to fall at the feet of the one who had appeared and to kiss them, but he said:

Take care not to touch me, for you have not yet been washed in holy baptism from the stench of idolatry.

Having said this, he became invisible.

Then Chromatius and his son Tiburtius fell at the feet of the saints and cried out loudly:

There is one true God, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son of the Almighty God, whom you, good teachers, preach!

The saints advised Chromatius, under the pretext of illness, to lay down his office as eparch, so that he would not hold trials in which he would have to torment, judge and torture Christians, nor attend impious spectacles, but would free himself from everything in order to receive spiritual wisdom. This he soon did.

When Chromatius approached baptism, to the question, "Dost thou believe in the One God?" he answered, "I believe," and to the question, "Dost thou renounce the idols?" he said, "I renounce them."

After this the priest asked him:

Dost thou renounce all thy sins?

Chromatius said to the priest:

This question should have been asked of me at the beginning. I will put on my garments again and will not receive holy baptism until I have

renounced my sins. I will be reconciled with those with whom I had enmity, and I will love those with whom I was angry; those who are angry with me I will ask for forgiveness. To my debtors I will forgive all debts; if I have taken anything from anyone by force, I will return it twofold. After the death of my wife I had two concubines; I will give them in marriage, bestowing marriage gifts upon them. I will free the male and female slaves, and I will arrange all my service and household affairs according to the will of God; then I shall say with boldness: "I renounce all my sins and will receive holy baptism."

These words of Chromatius were pleasing to the saints, and the baptism was postponed until he had fulfilled all that he had promised.

After this Agrestius Chromatius, with his son Tiburtius and with his whole household, was baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, so that the newly enlightened numbered up to 1400 persons of both sexes.

At that time there was a severe persecution of Christians; they could neither buy food nor draw water, for everywhere in the squares, in the streets, near the wells, at the springs and streams, by the command of the impious, small idols had been set up, with a watchful guard beside them, so that anyone wishing to buy something to eat or to draw water must first bow down to the idol standing there. The impious devised this so that it would be easier to recognize Christians and to seize them for torment. Seeing this, all the faithful were saddened, for without worshipping the idols it was impossible to obtain food and drink, and they resolved to endure hunger and thirst rather than worship idols. Then Chromatius commanded all the faithful in Rome to take food and drink secretly from his house, since he was very rich, and in his house all the faithful gathered to glorify God.

At that time the bishop in Rome was the blessed Gaius,[10] a relative of Diocletian, a native of Dalmatia. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the house of Chromatius and gave the newly converted Christians Communion of the Divine Mysteries. Because of the cruel persecution, Chromatius had to leave Rome for Campania,[11] to his estates, for he

10. St. Gaius was Pope of Rome from 283 to 296, in which year he suffered for the faith of Christ on August 11.

feared that his faith in Christ would be discovered in Rome; there he could live without such fear and confess the holy faith more freely. He announced to all the Christians that those who wished to take refuge from the persecution and live in peace could go to his estate, and he promised to provide them with the necessary sustenance. It was necessary that either Sebastian or Polycarp should accompany Chromatius and the Christians going with him, to comfort and strengthen the faithful. On this account there arose a pious dispute between the two saints, for each of them desired to remain in Rome in order to receive the crown of martyrdom. During their dispute the most holy bishop Gaius said:

If you both, desiring to die for Christ, deliver yourselves into the hands of the tormentors, you will deprive Christ's people of spiritual comfort. Therefore, I think, brother Polycarp, that you, as one who has the dignity of the priesthood and is filled with divine wisdom, should go together with Lord Chromatius, so that you may comfort the faithful with teaching, and strengthen and nourish the doubting with the Divine Mysteries.

Hearing this, the holy Polycarp obeyed the bishop's command and left Rome together with Chromatius and the other Christians. On the Sunday, after celebrating the holy Divine Liturgy, the bishop said to the faithful:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing the weakness of our nature, has shown the faithful in Him two paths: one the path of martyrdom, the other the path of confession. Whoever cannot go the path of martyrdom, let him go the path of confession. Whoever of you wishes to go with our spiritual children Chromatius and Tiburtius, let him go; and whoever wishes to remain with us here in the city, let him remain. No distance can separate those united by the grace of Christ. If I do not see you with my bodily eyes, you will always stand before my spiritual eyes.

As the bishop was speaking these words, Tiburtius cried out:

11. Campania was a coastal region of ancient Italy, south of Rome, on the western shore of the Apennine peninsula.

I beg you, father, allow me not to leave here, for I greatly desire, if it were possible, to be slain even a thousand times for God, if only I might receive from Him eternal and unending life!

Rejoicing in his faith and such zeal for God, the bishop wept and besought God that all who remained with him might be able to strive the good struggle and be deemed worthy of the glory of martyrdom. With the most holy bishop remained Marcellinus and Mark, with their father Tranquillinus; St. Sebastian; the youth Tiburtius, fair of body and yet fairer in soul; Nicostratus, chief keeper of records, with his brother Castorius and his wife Zoe; and Claudius with his brother Victorinus and his son Symphorian, who had been healed of dropsy. These alone remained in Rome; all the rest departed with Chromatius and Polycarp.

After their departure, the most holy bishop ordained Marcellinus and Mark deacons, consecrated their father Tranquillinus as a presbyter, and appointed St. Sebastian, who bore arms, as defender of the Church. Since they had no such secret place where they could celebrate the Divine Services, they abode in the palace of a certain imperial official named Castulus. This house was chosen both because Castulus and his household were secret Christians, and because the law issued concerning the worship of idols, though enforced everywhere, took no notice at all of those living in the imperial palace; for no one could even imagine that the Christian faith might enter there. Therefore the saints could conveniently conceal themselves with the Divine Services in Castulus's home. There they passed days and nights in prayer, tears, and fasting, enduring all things and beseeching God to deem them worthy of the martyr's crown. Men and women who had witnessed the healings wrought by them came to them in secret; for through the prayers of the saints, the sick were restored to health, the blind received their sight, and unclean spirits were driven out of people. For this reason many secretly received the Christian faith from the saints.

Once St. Tiburtius was walking along the road and saw a man who had fallen from the roof of his house and been dashed to pieces, while his parents and household wept over him. By his prayer he healed him, and immediately that man and all his household believed in Christ and received baptism.

At last the time came for the saints' suffering, and the blessed Zoe, wife of Nicostratus, was the first to enter the struggle of martyrdom. She was seized by impious guards while praying at the tomb of St. Peter the Apostle, and brought to trial, where they compelled her to offer sacrifice to the idol of the pagan god Ares[12]. She would not obey, and for this was cast into a dark prison, where they starved her for 6 days. Then Zoe was brought out of prison and died, suspended by her hair above the foul smoke rising from rotting refuse; her body was cast into the Tiber.

The saint appeared in a vision to St. Sebastian and told him of her death. Sebastian related this to Tranquillinus, who cried out:

"Women go before us to the crown! Why, then, do we wait?"

And he went to that same place, to the tomb of the Apostle. There the impious slew him with stones and cast him into the Tiber. Nicostratus, Castorius, Claudius, Victorinus, and Symphorian were seized while walking along the bank of the Tiber in search of the bodies of the saints, and brought before Fabian, the eparch of the city. For ten days the eparch strove by kindness, threats, and torments to persuade them to sacrifice to the idols. When he did not succeed, he ordered large stones to be tied about their necks and them to be drowned in the sea. The holy youth Tiburtius was secretly betrayed to the pagans by a false Christian named Torquatus, who was like a wolf in sheep's clothing. They seized Tiburtius and, binding him, brought him with Torquatus to the same Fabian for trial. At the trial, Torquatus at once revealed his deceit, declaring that he had only called himself a Christian, while in his soul he was full of impiety; and he testified against Tiburtius, accusing him of calling the Roman gods demons. But St. Tiburtius showed himself at the trial to be a true and courageous confessor of the name of Jesus Christ. The judge said to him:

"Do not bring shame upon your illustrious lineage. You are the son of so renowned a father, yet you have chosen for yourself this harsh and shameful Christian life, which leads to dishonor and torments, death and disgrace."

12. Ares (the Roman Mars), according to the beliefs of the ancient Greeks and Romans, was the god of war.

St. Tiburtius answered:

"Wise and Roman judge! You say that I dishonor my lineage by refusing to honor and acknowledge as gods wanton Venus[13], incestuous Zeus, deceitful Hermes[14], and child-devouring Cronus. I, however, say that I increase the honor of my lineage by honoring the one true God, who reigns in heaven, worshipping Him and being called His servant. Do you threaten me with torment? But are we Christians afraid to suffer for our God? By the sword? Thus, freed from the prison of the flesh, we shall receive heavenly freedom. By fire? We have quenched in the body a greater flame of lust, and shall not fear this fire. By exile? But our God is everywhere, and where we are with God, there is our place."

Then Fabian ordered that burning coals be brought, to set the saint upon them barefoot, and said:

"Either offer incense to the gods upon these coals, or step upon them yourself with bare feet."

Making the sign of the Cross, St. Tiburtius stepped barefoot upon the burning coals and, treading them underfoot, walked upon them as upon soft and fragrant flowers.

"Abandon your unbelief," he said to the judge, "and be convinced that my God is true, commanding the elements[15] and all creation. If you can, in the name of your Zeus, put your hand into boiling water and see whether it remains unharmed; but in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ I walk upon fire as upon watered flowers. Do you not see how all creation is subject to our Creator?"

The judge said:

13. Venus (the Greek Aphrodite), daughter of Zeus and Diana, was the pagan goddess of love and beauty. In the period of decline of the Roman Empire, to which belong the sufferings of the martyr Sebastian and his companions, she was also regarded as the goddess of unclean sensuality, arousing carnal lusts. She was depicted in statues in a shamelessly nude form, and in her honor wild festivals were celebrated, accompanied by immoral rites.

14. Hermias, otherwise Hermes (the Roman Mercury), was honored by the ancient Greeks and Romans as the son of Zeus and Maia, herald of the gods, messenger carrying out the will of Zeus, mediator between gods and men, and also the god of various discoveries, inventions, and crafts, the god of industry and commerce, which were supposedly only then to bring wealth when they went hand in hand with cunning and deceit, even theft and false oaths, provided all this was covered by a certain kind of decency. Hence Hermes was sometimes the patron even of theft and deception, approving every kind of lie and perjury.

15. An element (*stikhiya*) is the basic substance of all bodies, for example fire, earth, air, water.

"Who does not know that your Christ taught you sorcery!"

"Be silent, wretch," said the saint, "and do not dare with your venomous lips to utter with blasphemy that great and terrible Name! Do not offend my ears by blaspheming the name of my God!"

Fabian grew angry with him and sentenced him to death. Tiburtius was taken about 3 versts from the city, to the Lavican Way[16], and there, while he prayed to God, was beheaded with a sword. A Christian buried him at the place of his death, and those who came to Tiburtius's grave received, through his prayers, the grace of the Lord.

After this the same pretended Christian, Torquatus, informed the impious of Castulus, Marcellinus, and Mark. After being questioned three times, suspended, and tortured, St. Castulus was thrown into a pit, where he died, buried alive beneath the earth. Fabian made Marcellinus and Mark stand upon one tree-stump, nailing their feet with iron nails, and said:

"You shall stand thus until you bow down to the gods."

But they, nailed to one tree, sang: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together!" (Ps. 132:1). Thus they stood, praying to God day and night, and in the morning were pierced in the ribs with spears. Thus they came to the end of their torments.

After the suffering and death of these saints, St. Sebastian too was taken into custody, and the eparch reported him to Emperor Diocletian. Summoning him, Diocletian said:

"I considered you the foremost man at my court; but you, conspiring against me, have become an enemy to me and my gods, and until now concealed your malice."

St. Sebastian answered:

"I have always prayed to Christ for your health and asked peace for the whole Roman Empire. I worship the King of Heaven, for I see that it is unjust to worship a stone and seek help from it: it is plainly the invention of madmen."

Enraged, Diocletian ordered him to be taken outside the city and pierced with arrows in the midst of a field, after being bound naked to a

16. This road ran southeast from Rome to the city of Beneventum.

tree. When Sebastian was set up as a target, a multitude of soldiers stood on every side and shot arrows into his holy body, piercing it all over. Thinking that Sebastian was already dead, they went away, leaving him bound to the tree with arrows in his body. Irene, the wife of the holy martyr Castulus, came by night to take and bury the body of St. Sebastian, but found him alive and brought him to her house, where after some days the saint recovered from his wounds and became entirely well. Christians who came to him in secret urged him to leave Rome, as many believers had done, lest he again fall into the hands of the pagans. But after praying to God, he went and stood upon the steps of Heliogabalus[17]. Seeing the emperors passing by, he said:

"The priests of your gods, O emperors, trouble you with their impious sorceries, falsely telling you concerning the Christians that they are enemies of the Roman state. Know, then, that Christians do much that is beneficial for you, for they cease not to pray for your reign and for the health of the entire Roman army; and through their prayers this city prospers."

As St. Sebastian spoke these words, Diocletian looked at him and said:

"Are you Sebastian, whom we recently ordered to be shot with arrows?"

The saint answered:

"My Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to raise me up, that I might come to you and, before all the people, bear witness to your injustice, reproving you for unjustly raising persecutions against the Christians."

Diocletian ordered him to be seized and taken to the hippodrome[18]. There the holy Passion-bearer, loudly glorifying Christ and reproving the idols and Roman error, was beaten to death with clubs. With a joyful cry he departed to Christ, the Leader of the contest, to receive the crown of victory for his struggle. The impious cast his holy body by

17. Heliogabalus was a Roman emperor who reigned from 218 to 222 A.D. He built himself, as to a god, a temple on one of the hills of Rome, the Palatine, next to the imperial palace. The Steps of Heliogabalus were the steps of his temple.

18. The hippodrome was a racecourse, the place where horse races, contests with wild beasts, and so-called gladiators fighting one another took place, which was the favorite entertainment of the Romans. Here the tyrant-kings also led Christians out to be devoured by wild beasts.

night into a deep refuse-pit[19], lest any Christian find and take it. But the saint appeared in a vision to the devout Lucina and said to her:

Go to the refuse ditch near the circus; there thou shalt find my body hanging on a crossbeam. Take it, carry it to the catacombs[8506], and bury it at the entrance of the cave, by the Apostolic road.

The blessed woman at once took her servants and, coming at midnight to the appointed ditch, reverently took the body of the martyr and honorably buried it in the place indicated[20], giving glory to Christ our God, to Whom be glory unto ages of ages. Amen.

* * *

Memory of St. Modestus, Archbishop of Jerusalem

Память святого Модеста, архиепископа Иерусалимского

St. Modestus was born in the city of Sebaste[21] to pious and God-fearing parents. From his early years he felt a heartfelt inclination toward the Lord, and, renouncing the world, he lived a strict monastic life. Afterwards he was abbot of the monastery of Theodosius in Palestine. At that time the Persian king Chosroes made a devastating invasion of Syria and Palestine[22]. The Jews joined the Persians, to the number of forty thousand men, with the purpose of exterminating all the Christians of Palestine. The cruelty of the enemies of the Name of Christ poured out upon Jerusalem and its environs in all its force: many thousands of monks and clergy perished, all the churches were laid waste and burned, including the church of the Holy Sepulchre of the Lord; Patriarch Zachariah[23], with a multitude of the people and the Holy Cross of the Lord, was carried off captive to Persia. The Jews

19. The body of St. Sebastian was thrown into a ditch intended for the drainage of city filth, called the Sewer of Maximus, located near the racecourse called the "Circus Maximus," i.e., the Greatest Circus. – The repose of the holy martyr Sebastian took place on December 18, 287.

20. The relics of St. Sebastian the Martyr rest in his church outside the walls in Rome, bearing his name.

21. Here Sebastia in Cappadocia is meant, in the east of Asia Minor, on the border with Armenia.

22. Khosrow II, king of Persia, reigned from 590 to 628 A.D. His invasions of Syria and Palestine took place in the year 614.

23. St. Zacharias was Patriarch in Jerusalem from 609 to 633; in particular, he was a captive of the Persians from 614 to 628.

bought several thousand Christians from the Persians and put them to death. The number of all the Christians slain amounted to 90,000 persons. St. Modestus escaped destruction in this grievous time, and, after the invasion had ended, in the absence of the patriarch he was entrusted, with the title of locum tenens of the patriarchal see, to govern the Church of Palestine. The first act of St. Modestus was to gather the remains of the monks slain in the monastery of St. Sabbas the Sanctified and to lay them with honor in an ossuary. Then he set about with all zeal the restoration of the desecrated holy places. Fearing neither the malice of the Jews nor the arbitrariness of the Persian authorities, the saint restored the church of the Holy Sepulchre and the churches of Golgotha and Bethlehem, in which John the Almsgiver, Patriarch of Alexandria, helped him greatly. Blessed Zachariah, Patriarch of Jerusalem, who was in captivity among the Persians, comforted St. Modestus and the flock by written communications about himself and exhortations to remain steadfast in the faith. After fourteen years Patriarch Zachariah returned from captivity together with the Cross of the Lord[24], but, worn out by sorrows, he reposed in the same year. After his repose St. Modestus was raised to the patriarchal see[25]. St. Modestus governed the Church of Jerusalem in the rank of patriarch for not more than five years. Governing well the flock entrusted to him, St. Modestus performed many wondrous miracles and healings. Having attained advanced years, St. Modestus, in the ninety-seventh year of his life, peacefully yielded up his spirit to the Lord and passed over into the eternal heavenly abodes[26].

* * *

Memory of St. Florus, Bishop of Amisus

Память святого Флора, епископа Амийского

St. Florus lived in the reigns of the Greek emperors Justin, Tiberius and Maurice[27]; his father bore the same name, Florus, and his

24. This was in 628, under the Byzantine emperor Heraclius and under the successor of Khosrow, whom he had defeated, the Persian king Siroes,
25. In 633.
26. On the 18th of December 634.

mother was called Euphemia; his parents gave him a good education. Afterwards he entered the emperor's court service and was granted the rank of patrician[28]; he married and had children. When his wife died, and then the children died of smallpox, he was deeply grieved, and, finding in these circumstances of his life an indication of the providence of God that he ought to take care for his salvation, he left court service and settled in Anaplus[29]. Leading a pious life there, Florus was deemed worthy of ordination as bishop of the city of Amisus[30]. As a good shepherd of the sheep of Christ, he tended well the flock entrusted to him, taught those in his care in the Orthodox Faith and instructed them to keep the will of God and observe the commandments; and thus he fell asleep in the Lord[31].

* * *

Memory of the Venerable Michael the Synkellos

Память преподобного Михаила Синкелла

The Venerable Michael was a native of Jerusalem. His parents, pious people, gave him an excellent education. He was thoroughly versed in ancient Greek literature, and had also studied well the Christian writers and theologians, and from his youth he devoted himself to the monastic life.

After the death of his father, his mother and sisters took the monastic tonsure in one of the monasteries. Leading a good and God-pleasing life with strict observance of abstinence, Michael was deemed worthy of the presbyterial rank. Through his humility and ardent love for contemplation of God, he had withdrawn to a solitary place, where Theodore and Theophanes the Confessors[32] came to him for joint theological studies; but the Patriarch of Jerusalem[33], wishing to make use

27. The Byzantine emperors: Justin II, 565–578; Tiberius, 578–582; St. Maurice, 582–602.
28. Patrician was a fairly high rank in the Byzantine civil hierarchy, conferring the right to the title of synkletikos or senator.
29. Anaplus was a suburb of Constantinople.
30. The city of Amin(s), or Amis, in Cappadocia, the eastern region of Asia Minor.
31. At the beginning of the seventh century.
32. Theodore and Theophanes, the so-called "Inscribed," were full brothers, twins; they then bore the rank of hieromonks. The memory of the first is on December 27.

of his gifts for the needs of the Church, summoned him from there and raised him to the rank of synkellos[34]. Afterwards he was also given a commission of special importance at that time. In Rome there then flared up lively disputes over the iconoclastic heresy[35]; these disputes were conducted not only privately, in homes, but also publicly, in the streets of the city, and were accompanied by popular disturbances. The Pope of Rome addressed a request to the Patriarch of Jerusalem Thomas for assistance in uprooting the heresy and establishing the Orthodox Faith according to the conciliar patristic tradition, and put several questions to him on this matter. In response to this request of the Pope, the Patriarch of Jerusalem sent the synkellos Michael, with his co-workers Theodore and Theophanes and others, to pacify the Church and refute the heresy, and to beg the iconoclast Emperor Leo the Armenian[36] that he refrain from persecuting Orthodoxy. But Leo subjected him to torture and sent him into imprisonment. Although he was afterwards released from this imprisonment, in the reign of the iconoclast Emperor Theophilus[37], who, having utterly rejected the veneration of the holy icons, raised a cruel persecution against the Church of God, the Venerable Michael with his companions again underwent torments. For confessing the truth, Theodore and Theophanes were subjected to the following outrage: by the command of the impious emperor, insulting words were branded – inscribed[38] – upon their faces with red-hot

33. Patriarch of Jerusalem Thomas I.

34. A synkellos was a member of the patriarchal council, who managed the affairs of church administration. The synkelloi carried out various commissions of the patriarchs, were direct witnesses of their lives, constantly being with them, and after their death often became their successors.

35. The iconoclastic heresy openly manifested itself under Emperor Leo the Isaurian (717–741), who was the first persecutor of the holy icons; he was succeeded by the iconoclast emperors Constantine Copronymus (741–775) and Leo IV the Khazar (775–780). This heresy was condemned by the Second Council of Nicaea, the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787), during the reign of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, when his mother Irene governed affairs on account of the child emperor's minority; but even after the conciliar condemnation the heresy long continued to exist, until the final restoration of the veneration of icons in 842.

36. Leo the Armenian reigned from 813 to 820. The Venerable Michael the Synkellos was sent to Constantinople in 817. Even earlier he had shown himself a zealous champion of Orthodoxy in the struggle against other heretics of that time, such as the Paulicians, Monophysites, and Nestorians.

37. Theophilus reigned from 829 to 842.

iron stamps; the correspondence of the Patriarch of Jerusalem with the Pope of Rome that was in their possession was also confiscated, although they had tried to conceal it from the persecutors of the true faith. But the venerable and glorious fathers were not at all frightened by this and did not waver in their convictions, but, like firm adamant[39], they resisted the demands of the iconoclast and bravely defended the teaching of Orthodoxy. Many times they held extended discussions about the Orthodox faith and delivered speeches against the iconoclast emperor, for which they were condemned by him to exile. Blessed Michael was at first confined in the palace prison, together with his disciple and co-worker Job, where heavy fetters were placed upon him, and afterwards, with the same Job, he was exiled to a monastery (that of Paysiadus). During all this time the saint shed many bitter tears; sufferings broke his health and his body was bent, but the confessor remained unshakably firm in spirit. When, after the death of Theophilus, his wife, the Empress Theodora[40], reigned with her son Michael, and the veneration of icons was finally established[41], and the zealots of the Orthodox teaching were returned from exile and restored to their former offices, the regent Theodora proposed that Michael, a confessor of the Orthodox faith, occupy the see of the Patriarch of Constantinople in place of the deposed iconoclast patriarch John the Grammarian[42]; but he declined this, and the well-known champion of Orthodoxy, St. Methodius, was appointed patriarch; Michael, in the rank of synkellos, having received in his charge the great cathedral church of Constantinople, rested after the grievous trials he had endured. He lived piously and

38. From this he acquired the name "Inscribed."

39. Adamant (diamond) is a stone of such hardness that it cuts and scratches other stones without suffering harm from them. This name in ecclesiastical literature is applied to many fathers and teachers of the Church who became famous for the steadfastness of their faith and character.

40. Theodora reigned from 849 to 855, and Michael, surnamed "the Drunkard," from 855 to 867.

41. The restoration of the veneration of icons took place at the Council of Constantinople of 842, and in memory of this triumph of Orthodoxy a special "Rite of Orthodoxy" was then established in the Church, which is still celebrated on the first Sunday of the Holy Great Lent.

42. John VII, surnamed Grammatikos for his learning, was Patriarch from 832 to 842.

God-pleasingly to the age of eighty-five and peacefully departed to the Lord[43].

* * *

NOTES

8493. The ancient Greeks believed that before the gods they honored, other beings ruled the world: Cronus and the other Titans, demigods half-human, to whom the Greeks ascribed more human qualities. Cronus, or Saturn, according to their beliefs, was the youngest of the Titans, son of Uranus (heaven) and Gaia (earth). He reigned on the island of Crete and afterward usurped dominion over the whole world. Having married his sister Rhea, he had several sons and daughters by her; but since it had been foretold to him by Gaia that he would be dethroned by his children, he swallowed them as soon as they were born, except Zeus, who was saved by Rhea. Zeus afterward overthrew Cronus and compelled him to disgorge the children he had swallowed. Zeus, or Dios, was honored by the Greeks as father of gods and men, the mighty and terrible ruler of heaven and of the whole universe, who sent thunder and lightning to earth. Hera, according to Greek belief, was the highest goddess, the wife and at the same time sister of Zeus, who boasted of her high dignity and her marital rights. Besides this, however, Greek myths ascribe to Zeus carnal union with many other lesser goddesses and even with human wives. The other Greek gods and goddesses, to whom the Greeks attributed all human qualities, passions, and vices, are depicted in the same coarsely sensual features. In general, in the religion of the ancient Greeks and Romans everything furthered the growth of impiety; everything pointed to models for progress in it.

8506. The catacombs were underground passages and caves which the first Christians dug in the environs of Rome (also in Naples, Syracuse, and many other cities) for the burial of the dead. Earlier they were called by other names, and the name "catacombs" was first applied to the place of burial of St. Stephen in the fourth century. In the walls of these passages recesses were made where the bodies of the dead were laid without a coffin and then walled up with stones. Less often, individual tombs were built in them. The catacombs were lit by lamps and by openings in the ceiling. Here, at the tombs of relatives, friends, saints, and martyrs, the faithful gathered to celebrate their memorial days, to offer common prayers to God, and to perform the mystery of the Eucharist, joined with a common meal in imitation of the supper of Jesus Christ. The marble slabs

43. The Venerable Michael the Synkellos reposed on December 18, about 845. His holy relics in the Constantinopolitan monastery of the Pantokrator were seen by Russian pilgrims: Stephen of Novgorod in 1342 and the hierodeacon Zosimas in 1420. After the Venerable Michael the Synkellos there remained several works, the best of which is "Confession of Faith"; his other works consist of several panegyrics and several hymns, among them one on the restoration of the veneration of icons.

over the tombs of saints and martyrs served as the Holy Table during the celebration of the Eucharist.



THE NINETEENTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 19

19 декабря

New Calendar December 19 · Old Calendar January 1 (civil dates)

Sufferings of the Holy Martyr Boniface

Страдания святого мученика Вонифатия

Once there lived in Rome a woman named Aglaida, whose father Acacius had at one time been governor of the city. Being young and beautiful, and possessing rich estates inherited from her parents, and living a licentious life without a lawful husband, she, overcome by the passion of the weak flesh, spent her days in fornication and sin. She had in her household a faithful slave, who was steward over her house and estates; he was young and handsome. His name was Boniface, and Aglaida lived with him in a criminal relationship, gratifying her carnal desire. Nor is it shameful to speak of this, for what follows will tell of the blessed and wondrous change in their lives; for when the saints are praised, their former sins are not passed over in silence, so as to show that not all were blessed and righteous from their youth, but that, like others, they had a corrupted body, and that by true repentance, a good change within themselves, and great virtues, they became renowned for their holiness. This is told in the Lives of the Saints, so that we sinners too may not despair, but hasten to swift amendment, knowing that with God's help, even after sins, it is possible to become saints, if only we desire it and labor for it. Indeed, it is a wonderfully gladdening narrative, in which we hear that a sinner, seemingly without hope of salvation, beyond expectation becomes a saint, and moreover a martyr of Christ, like Saint Boniface, who in his lustful life served sin, and afterward became a confessor, a valiant ascetic, and a glorious sufferer for Christ. During his dissolute life Boniface was a slave of sin, yet he had certain virtues worthy of praise: he

was merciful to the poor, loving to wanderers, and responsive to all who were in misfortune; to some he gave generous alms, to others he brought comfort with love, to still others he offered help with compassion. Having a firm desire to amend his life, Boniface often prayed to God that He would deliver him from the snares of the devil and help him to become master over his desires and passions. And the Lord did not despise His servant, nor permit him to sink still deeper into the filth of sin, but graciously arranged that his impure deeds were washed away by the shedding of his blood, and through this his soul became as it were a royal purple and was crowned with the martyr's crown. This came about in the following manner.

At that time there was a severe persecution of Christians; a deep idolatrous darkness covered the whole East, and many believers were tormented and put to death for Christ. To the mistress of Boniface, Aglaida, there came a saving thought and a strong, irresistible desire to have martyrs' relics in her house. Having no servant more faithful and obedient than Boniface, she called him, revealed to him her desire, and said to him privately:

"You yourself know, brother in Christ, how greatly we are defiled by many sins, not at all concerned for the future life and salvation; how then shall we stand before the Dread Judgment of God, at which we must be condemned for our deeds to grievous torments? But from a certain pious man I have heard that if anyone has in his possession the relics of Christ's martyrs and honors them, he receives help unto salvation, and in the house of such a one sin does not multiply, so that such a person may even attain that eternal blessedness which the holy martyrs have been granted. Now, they say, many are performing feats for Christ, and, giving their bodies to torments, receive martyrs' crowns. Serve me: now the time has come to show whether you truly love me. Go quickly to those lands where persecution against Christians has been raised, and take pains to bring me the relics of one of the holy martyrs, so that I may lay them with honor in my house, build a church to that martyr, and always have him as my guardian, defender, and constant intercessor before God."

Having heard Aglaïs, Boniface gladly agreed to her proposal and expressed full readiness to set out on the journey. The mistress gave him much gold, for martyrs' bodies could not be obtained without gifts and gold: the impious tormentors, seeing the strong love and zeal of the Christians for the relics, did not give them freely but sold them at a high price, and thus acquired great profits for themselves. Boniface took from his mistress much gold, partly for the ransom of the martyrs' relics and partly for distributing alms to the poor; he also prepared many different fragrances, linen, and everything needed for wrapping the honorable martyrs' bodies. Taking with him many more slaves, helpers, and horses, he set out on the road. Leaving the house, he said to his mistress with a laugh:

"And what will happen, mistress, if I do not find the body of any martyr, and my own body, tormented for Christ, is brought to you—will you then receive it with honor?"

Aglaida, laughing, called him a drunkard and a sinner, and reproaching him, said:

"Now is the time, my brother, not for mockery but for reverence. During the journey you must carefully guard yourself against every disorder and jesting: a holy task must be performed honorably and decorously, and on this road you ought to remain in humility and self-restraint. Remember that you are going to serve holy relics, which we are unworthy not only to touch, but even to look upon. Go in peace; and may God, who took the form of a servant and shed His blood for us, forgive our sins, send you His Angel, and direct you on a good and prosperous way."

Boniface took his mistress's charge to heart and set out on the way, pondering in his mind what he would have to touch with his defiled, sinful hands. Boniface began to grieve over his former sins and resolved to fast: to eat no meat, drink no wine, and to pray diligently and often, that he might come to the fear of God. For fear is the father of attention, and attention is the mother of inner peace, from which the beginning and root of repentance is born. Thus Boniface planted in himself the root of repentance, beginning with the fear of God, attentiveness to

himself, and unceasing prayer; he acquired in himself a desire for a perfect life.

When Boniface reached Asia Minor and entered the famous Cilician city of Tarsus,[1] a cruel persecution of Christians had then been raised there under the emperor Diocletian and his co-ruler Maximian, and the believers were subjected to grievous tortures. Leaving his slaves at the inn and ordering them to rest, he himself, without resting, at once went to see the sufferings of the martyrs of whom he had previously heard. Arriving at the place of torment, Boniface saw a multitude of people gathered to watch the tortures inflicted on the Christians. For all of them only one charge had been declared: the Christian faith and a pious life; but the torments laid upon them were unequal and varied: one hung head downward, with a fire kindled on the ground beneath him; another was bound crosswise to four posts; another lay being sawn asunder with a saw; another was being planed with sharp instruments by the tormentors; to another they were gouging out the eyes; from another they were cutting off the limbs; another they impaled on a stake, lifting him from the ground and fixing the stake in the earth, so that it passed up to his neck; some had their bones broken, some had their hands and feet cut off, and rolled on the ground like a ball; yet on all their faces was seen spiritual joy, for while bearing torments unbearable to man, they were strengthened by the grace of God. Blessed Boniface looked on all this with attention, now marveling at the manly endurance of the martyrs, now desiring for himself the same crown. Then, filled with divine zeal and standing in the midst of that place, he began to embrace all who had shown themselves as martyrs, who were by then some twenty persons, and, in the hearing of all, cried out loudly:

"Great is the God of the Christians! Great is He, for He helps His servants and strengthens them in such great torments!"

Having said this, he again began to kiss the martyrs and tenderly to kiss their feet; and those who had no feet, he embraced the remaining

1. Cilicia — a southeastern Roman province of Asia Minor. Tarsus — a large and populous city of this province, in its southern part, on a fertile plain by the river Cydnus, which flows into the Mediterranean not far from it; to this day a fairly significant trading city.

parts of their bodies, pressing them to his breast, calling them blessed, because, having bravely endured brief torments, they would at once receive eternal rest, consolation, and endless joy. At the same time Boniface prayed for himself, that he too might be a companion of the martyrs in such a struggle and a partaker of the crown which they receive from Christ, the Master of the contest. The whole people turned their eyes upon him, especially the judge who was tormenting the holy sufferers. Seeing before him in the person of Boniface a stranger and an unknown man, he asked who he was and whence. And at once ordering that he be seized and brought before him, he asked:

"Who are you?"

"A Christian!" answered the saint.

But the judge wished to know his name and origin. Answering this, the saint said:

"My first and most beloved name is Christian; I came here from Rome; and if you wish to know also the name given me by my parents, I am called Boniface."

"Then, Boniface," said the judge, "approach our gods, before I tear your flesh and bones, and offer them sacrifice. Then you will be granted many blessings, appease the gods, escape the torments that threaten you, and receive many gifts from us."

In answer to this Boniface said:

"I ought not even to answer your words, but I shall say again what I have already repeated many times: I am a Christian, and this alone you will hear from me; and if you do not wish to hear this, then do with me whatever pleases you!"

When Boniface had spoken these words, the judge at once ordered that he be stripped, hung up by the feet, and beaten severely. The saint was beaten so hard that whole pieces of flesh fell from his body and the bones were laid bare. Yet he, as though feeling no pain and taking no heed of the wounds he received, fixed his eyes only upon the holy martyrs, seeing in their sufferings an example for himself and taking comfort in the thought that he had been deemed worthy to suffer with them for Christ. Then the tormentor commanded that his torments be somewhat relaxed, and, seeking once more to persuade him by words, said:

"Boniface, let this beginning of torment serve to show you what you ought to choose. You have endured unbearable sufferings; come to your senses, wretched man, and offer sacrifice, lest you be immediately subjected to still greater and more cruel torments."

The saint replied:

"Why do you command me what is unseemly, O madman? I cannot even bear to hear of your gods, and you command me to offer sacrifice to them!"

Then the judge, in great anger, ordered sharp needles to be thrust under the nails of his hands and feet; but the saint, raising his eyes and mind to heaven, endured in silence. Afterwards the judge devised a new torment: he commanded that tin be melted and poured into the saint's mouth. As the tin was being melted, the saint, lifting his hands to heaven, prayed:

"Lord my God, Jesus Christ, who strengthened me in the torments I have already borne, abide with me now also, lightening my sufferings. Thou art my only consolation: grant me, then, a clear sign that Thou art helping me to overcome Satan and this unrighteous judge; for Thy sake, as Thou Thyself knowest, I am suffering."

Having finished this prayer, Boniface turned also to the holy martyrs with a request that they help him by their prayers to endure the terrible torment. The tormentors came up to him, opened his mouth with iron instruments, and poured the tin into his throat, but they did no harm to the saint. The bystanders, seeing such cruelty, shuddered and began to cry out:

"Great is the God of the Christians! Great is the King, Christ! We all believe in Thee, O Lord!"

Crying out thus, they all turned toward the idol-temple nearby, wishing to destroy it, and they loudly reviled the judge and threw stones at him to kill him. The judge, rising from his seat of judgment, fled in shame to his house, and he ordered Boniface kept under guard.

In the morning, when the agitation had subsided and the popular uprising had been checked, the judge again appeared on the judgment seat and, summoning Boniface, reviled the name of Christ and mocked the manner of Christ's crucifixion. The saint, unable to bear reproaches

against his Lord, himself spoke many words offensive to the judge, in turn reviling the soulless gods and exposing the blindness and madness of those who worshipped them, and by this he angered the judge even more, who at once ordered a cauldron of pitch to be heated and the holy martyr thrown into it. But the Lord did not forsake His servant: suddenly an Angel came down from heaven and sprinkled the martyr in the cauldron; and when the pitch overflowed, a great fire arose around, which scorched many of the impious pagans standing nearby. The saint came out unharmed, receiving no injury from the pitch or the fire. Then the tormentor, seeing the power of Christ, grew afraid lest he himself should suffer, and ordered that Boniface be beheaded with the sword at once. The soldiers took the martyr and led him to execution. The saint, having asked for a little time for prayer, turned toward the east and prayed:

"Lord, Lord God! Make me worthy of Thy mercies and be my helper, that the enemy, because of my sins, committed in madness, may not block my way to heaven, but receive my soul in peace and number me with the holy martyrs who shed their blood for Thee and kept the faith to the end; and the flock purchased by Thy precious Blood, Thy people, O Christ, who are near to me, deliver from all impiety and pagan error, for Thou art blessed and abidest forever!"

Having thus prayed, Boniface bowed his head beneath the sword and was beheaded; from his wound blood flowed together with milk. The unbelievers, seeing this miracle, at once turned to Christ, about 550 persons, and, leaving the abominable idols, joined the faithful. Such was the end of Saint Boniface, who, setting out from home on his journey, had foretold to his mistress, laughing, what he then truly proved and accomplished in deed[2].

Meanwhile the friends of Boniface and the servants of Aglaida who had come with him to seek the relics, knowing nothing of what had happened, sat in the inn and awaited Boniface. Seeing that he did not return by evening, they were surprised at not seeing him; and all night, and also the next morning, they began to judge him and speak ill of him

2. St. Boniface the martyr suffered and died on December 19, 290.

(as they afterwards themselves related), supposing that he had gotten drunk somewhere and was spending his time with harlots:

"See," they said, laughing, "how our Boniface has come to seek the holy relics!"

But since he did not return on the second night or on the third day, they began to be perplexed, and searched for him, going through the whole city and inquiring after him. By chance, or, rather, by God's providence, they met a man who was the brother of a commentarisius[3], and asked him whether he had seen a certain man, a stranger who had come here. He replied that the day before a certain foreign man, having suffered for Christ at the place of torments, had been condemned to death and beheaded with the sword.

"I do not know," he said, "whether this is the one you are looking for? Tell me, what is his appearance?"

They described Boniface's outward appearance, that he was small of stature and had reddish hair; they also told him of other features of his face. Then the man said to them:

"Surely this is the one you are seeking!"

But they did not believe him, saying:

"You do not know the man we are looking for."

And conversing among themselves, they recalled Boniface's former character, mocked him, and said:

"Will a drunkard and a debauchee suffer for Christ?!"

But the brother of the commentarisius insisted on his point.

"In appearance, a man such as you describe was indeed tortured at the trial the day before yesterday and yesterday," he said; "however, what hinders you? Go and see for yourselves his body lying in the place where he was beheaded."

They set off after that man and came to the place of torment, where a military guard stood so that the bodies of the martyrs would not be carried off by Christians. The man walking in front showed them the beheaded martyr lying there and said:

"Is this not the one you are looking for?"

3. On the office and duties of the commentariensis see p. 987, note 1.

When they saw the martyr's body, they at once recognized their friend; and when they set his head, which lay apart, against the trunk, they were fully convinced that it was Boniface, and were greatly astonished; at the same time they began to feel shame, because they had thought and spoken ill of him, and they feared that punishment might befall them for having condemned the saint and mocked his life, not knowing his heart's thoughts and good intention.

As they looked upon the saint's face and were in great amazement, suddenly they saw that Boniface was gradually beginning to open his eyes and looked graciously upon them as upon his friends; his lips smiled, his face shone, as if showing that he forgave them all their offenses against him.

They were struck with awe and at the same time rejoiced, and, shedding warm tears, they wept over him, saying:

"Servant of Christ, forget our sins, that we unrighteously condemned your life and foolishly mocked you!"

Then they gave the impious men 500 gold coins and took the body and head of Saint Boniface, anointed them with fragrant ointments, wrapped them in clean shrouds, and, placing them in a coffer, set off for home, bringing the martyr's body to their mistress. When they drew near Rome, an Angel of God appeared in a dream to Aglaida and said:

"Prepare to receive him who was once your servant, but who now has become our brother and fellow-minister. Receive him who was your slave, and who will now be your master, and reverently honor him, for he is the guardian of your soul and the protector of your life."

She awoke in terror, and at once, taking several honorable church clergy, went out to meet the holy martyr Boniface, whom she had earlier sent on his way as a slave; and upon his return she received him into her house reverently, with tears, as her master. And she recalled the prophecy the saint had uttered as he set out on his journey, and gave thanks to God, who had so arranged matters that Saint Boniface had become, for his own and her sins, a sacrifice well-pleasing to God. On her estate, which lay fifty stadia[4] from Rome, Aglaida built a wondrous

church in the name of the holy martyr Boniface, and in it she placed the holy relics; after this many miracles began to be wrought through the martyr's prayers, manifold healings flowed to the sick, demons were cast out of people, and many who prayed at the saint's tomb received the fulfillment of their petitions.

Afterwards the blessed Aglaida herself, having distributed all her property to the poor and needy, renounced the world, and, living yet eighteen years in great repentance, died in peace and was joined to the holy martyr Boniface, being laid beside his tomb[5].

Thus this pair of saints, having miraculously changed their former life, received a good end: the one, having washed away his sins with blood, was deemed worthy of the martyr's crown; the other cleansed herself of fleshly defilement by tears and an austere life; and both appeared justified and blameless before the Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory forever. Amen.

* * *

Life of Saint Boniface the Merciful, Bishop of Ferentium

Житие святого Вонифатия Милостивого, епископа Ферентийского

St. Boniface[6] was a native of the Tuscan region,[7] in Italy. From childhood he was distinguished by his love for the poor: whenever he happened to see someone unclothed, he would take off his own garment and clothe the naked man with it. Thus he would come home

4. A stadion is a measure of length of 88 sazhens; consequently 50 stadia equal a little under 9 versts. The head of St. Boniface was later seen in Constantinople in 1200 by the Russian pilgrim Antony. Over the church of St. Boniface in Rome, built by Aglaida, there was afterwards erected a larger church in the name of St. Alexis, the man of God, from the lower church into the new upper one; in whose sacristy their honorable heads are now kept separately.

5. According to the Roman acts of the holy martyrs and the Greek synaxarion of Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, Aglaida, after her ascetic labors, was granted even the gift of miracles and of the expulsion of demons; she was numbered among the saints, and her memory is celebrated together with the holy martyr Boniface.

6. St. Boniface the Merciful lived in the 6th century.

7. Tuscia — otherwise Etruria — an ancient region of central Italy, situated between the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Apennine Mountains, to the north of Rome.

sometimes without his tunic, sometimes without his cloak,[8] and his mother, herself a poor widow, would often be angry with him and say:

"You do this in vain, clothing the poor when you yourself are poor."

One day she entered her granary, in which enough bread had been stored for the whole year, and found it empty: Boniface, her son, had secretly given it all to the poor. His mother began to weep, striking herself in the face and crying out:

"Woe is me! Where shall I find food for the whole year, and with what shall I feed myself and my family?"

Boniface came to her and began to comfort her. But when, even after much weeping, he could not soothe her with his words, he begged her to leave the granary for a little while. When she had gone out, Boniface shut the door of the granary, fell to the ground, and began to pray to God—and at once the granary was filled with wheat. Boniface gave thanks to God and called his mother. When she saw the granary full of grain, she was comforted and glorified God. From that time she no longer forbade her son to give to the poor as much as he wished, for she saw in him such great faith, by which he was not impoverished through almsgiving, and whatever he asked of God, he received. Boniface's mother kept hens in her house, which a fox would steal, causing loss to the poor widow. One day the boy Boniface was standing by his door when he saw the fox come as usual, seize a bird, and run up the hill. Grieved at the sorrow this caused his mother, he ran to the church, fell to the ground, and in prayer complained to God of the fox, saying:

"Lord, can it truly be pleasing to Thee that I should be unable to live from my mother's labors? Yet here the fox comes and steals our food!"

After praying, Boniface returned home and saw that very same fox come into their yard, carrying in its mouth the bird it had stolen. It dropped the bird alive before Boniface, and itself died at once. Thus God hears those who hope in Him even in small matters, having great care for us, that when we receive little from Him, we may hope to receive more, as may be possible.

8. Chiton — the Greek name for an undergarment (shirt); among Eastern peoples, a *svita* or *svitka* — an outer, plain, coarse garment.

St. Boniface was later appointed bishop in the city of Ferentino,[9] and the priest Gaudentius, who was the saint's servant and saw with his own eyes all that he did, relates many of his miracles. The diocese of Ferentino was in great poverty, which serves godly people as a guardian of humility. The bishop had no church property to provide for his needs, save only the income from a vineyard belonging to the church. Once there was a great hailstorm, and it beat down all the vines with their grapes, so that only a few clusters remained on certain vines. Blessed Boniface went into the vineyard, saw that everything had been destroyed, and began to thank God that, in his poverty, he had begun to endure even greater want. When the time came for the grapes to ripen, Boniface, as was customary, set a watchman and ordered him to guard the remaining clusters diligently. One day he instructed the priest Constantius, his grandson, to wash all the wine vessels in the bishop's house and pitch them, as was customary. The priest was greatly astonished to hear this, since there was no wine, yet the bishop ordered the wine vessels to be prepared. Not daring to ask why they must be prepared, but carrying out the command, he did everything as customary. Boniface went into the vineyard, gathered the clusters, carried them to the winepress,[10] and ordered everyone to leave, remaining there himself with one boy, whom he told to press all those few clusters in the winepress. When the wine began to trickle out little by little, the saint took it in a vessel and poured a little into each of the prepared jars, to bless them, dividing all the wine so that the vessels were barely moistened with it. Thus Boniface blessed all the vessels, called the priest, and ordered him to summon the poor, so that they might come as usual and take the new wine from the vessels. Then the wine in the press began to multiply, until all the vessels the poor had brought were filled. Seeing that there was enough wine for all who had come, the saint told the boy to leave the press, then shut the wine storehouse, set a seal upon it, and went to the church. Three days later Boniface summoned the priest Constantius and, after praying,

9. Ferentinum — a city in ancient Etruria, in Italy; now the ruins of Ferento.
10. A wine-press — a pit in which ripened grapes were pressed to prepare wine from their juice; the grapes were pressed either by a special apparatus or simply by foot.

opened the door of the wine storehouse. He saw that all the vessels and jars into which a little wine had been poured for a blessing were full to overflowing with foaming wine, so that it spilled over their rims; even the ground was soaked with wine. If the bishop had delayed entering the storehouse but a little, the whole ground would have been covered with the wine that had poured out. When the priest saw this and was greatly astonished, the saint forbade him to tell anyone, fearing and shunning vain human glory. At another time, when the memory of the holy Martyr Proclus was being celebrated, a noble man of that same city, named Fortunatus, asked St. Boniface, after the service to the holy Martyr had been completed, to come to his house and give his blessing. The saint did not refuse, because Fortunatus asked him with faith and true love. After celebrating the Divine service, Boniface came to Fortunatus's table. Before he had prayed before the meal, as was customary, one of the mimes stood by the doors with a monkey and played the cymbals.[11] Hearing the sound of the cymbals, the saint grew angry and said:

"Alas, this impious man is dead—truly dead! I have come to dine, and have not yet opened my mouth to offer the customary praise to God, when he has forestalled me, come with a monkey, and played the cymbals!"

And he added:

"Go, give him food and drink, but know that he is dead."

That impious man took bread and wine and was about to go out through the gate, when suddenly a great stone fell from behind and struck him on the head. The mime fell to the ground and was carried home in people's arms, half-dead; on the following day, as the saint had foretold, he died. Thus we ought to reverence and honor the holy servants of God, for they are temples of God, and God dwells in them. When a saint grows angry, the God who dwells in him grows angry along with him, and then the saint can punish the one who has offended him with a single word. On another occasion, that same priest Constan-

11. Cymbal — an ancient percussion musical instrument, consisting of a metal plate, in the middle of which a strap or cord was fastened for putting it on the right hand. One cymbal was struck against another worn on the left hand, whereby the sound was produced.

tius, the saint's grandson, sold his horse for twenty gold coins and, having placed them in a little coffer,[12] went away on an errand. It happened unexpectedly that many poor people came to the bishop and importuned him, asking him to help them in some way. Having nothing to give them, the saint grieved in his soul, not wishing to send the poor away without help. Remembering the money Constantius had received for the horse, he went to the room where his coffer was, blessed it for this cause, opened it, took the gold coins, and gave them to the poor. When the priest returned and saw the coffer open and found no money in it, he was deeply offended, made a great commotion, and began to shout angrily:

"It is impossible for me to live here!"

At his voice everyone in the bishop's house gathered, and the bishop himself came and began to comfort him, trying to soothe him with kind words. But he answered the saint in vexation:

"Everyone here lives well, but I alone have no place and cannot live in peace. Give me my money, and I will leave you."

The bishop went to the church of the Most Pure Theotokos, put on a phelonion,[13] lifted his hands upward and raised his eyes to heaven, praying that the Lord would send him from somewhere as many gold coins as he had taken from the priest, so that he might give them to him and soften his anger. As the saint prayed, he turned his eyes upon himself and saw twenty gold coins suddenly appear on his phelonion, lying between his raised hands and shining as though they had just been made and taken from the fire. The bishop gave thanks to God, came out of the church, and threw the money onto the clothing of the angry priest, saying:

"Here, take the money over which you grieved, and know that after my death, because of your greed, you will not be bishop of this church!"

And so it truly came to pass: the priest had been saving money in order to obtain the bishopric, but the word spoken by a man of God

12. A small chest — a box of small size.

13. Phelonion — one of the priestly vestments, a chasuble. In antiquity the phelonion was worn during the celebration of services both by priests and by bishops. Today only presbyters are vested in it.

does not fall in vain, and Constantius ended his life in the rank of priest.

Once two Goths were traveling to the city of Ravenna,[14] and, as travelers, they were received lovingly by St. Boniface in the bishop's house. When they departed, Boniface accompanied them, himself poured wine into a wooden vessel, and gave it to them for the journey as a token of blessing. The vessel was small, so that the wine in it should have been enough for only one meal. They took it and went on their way; when they needed it, they drank wine from the vessel, yet the wine in it did not diminish at all, and the vessel always remained full. After staying several days in Ravenna, the travelers returned and came again to the saint, thanking him for his blessing and bringing him the vessel with the same wine. They declared that throughout the whole journey they had drunk no other wine, yet the wine in the vessel had not been exhausted.

We must not omit, either, what is related by one of the clergy of that region, an honorable man.

"Once," says the cleric, "Saint Boniface entered his vineyard and saw such a multitude of caterpillars that the whole vineyard was covered with them, and all the greenery was about to perish. And the saint said to the caterpillars: 'I adjure you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: depart from here, and dare no longer to eat this grass.' And immediately, at the word of the servant of God, the whole multitude of caterpillars went out of the vineyard, so that not one remained.

May the Lord God, Who glorifies His saints and fulfills the desire of those who fear Him, Himself also be glorified in them unto the ages. Amen.

* * *

14. Ravenna — a city with a harbor on the Adriatic Sea, located on the northeastern shore of the Apennine peninsula. Emperor Augustus fortified it strongly, and it was considered the bulwark of Italy. The emperors of the Western Roman Empire, beginning with Honorius, had their residence here. Ravenna exists to this day and is the principal flourishing city of the Italian region of the same name.

Life of St. Gregory, Archbishop of Omir

Житие святого Григория, архиепископа Омиритского

At first, St. Gregory labored in the city of Mediolanum, where, by divine election, he shone upon the candlestick of ecclesiastical service in the rank of deacon. Later, other cities and villages had him as a preacher of the name of Christ and an uprooter of idolatrous deception. Gregory was the son of pious parents, Agapius and Theodotia; he was brought up in piety and the fear of God and, filled with the grace of God from his youth, became a wonderworker and healer. The Lord was preparing him for service in the episcopal rank, and foretold this to him through revelations and clairvoyant fathers. When Gregory came to Mediolanum to visit a certain hermit, the latter foretold all that lay in the future, for he was clairvoyant. He even foresaw Gregory's coming to him when Gregory was still thirty stadia[15] away, and told his servant of it. There was also another elder, a schemamonk,[16] who had withdrawn from the world for God's sake and lived in the mountains. Having learned of this elder, Gregory went to him. As he drew near the mountain where this father lived, he saw a pillar of fire in the air and fell to the ground in fear. Then, taking courage, he rose and went to see what this fiery apparition might be. From afar it seemed to him to be a flame; but as he approached, he saw the hermit coming toward him. When the hermit drew near, he kissed him and called him Gregory, although he had never before been acquainted with him. Gregory lived with this great elder for two days, and there was vouchsafed to him wondrous visions. At midnight he saw this God-bearing man stretching out his hands in prayer, lifted from the earth and standing in the air. Gregory marveled at the vision, and in the morning the elder called him to himself and said in a quiet and gentle voice:

"Go, my friend and brother! Hear what I shall tell you; for this you have come to me, that you might learn all that has been revealed to me

15. Poprishche — a measure of distance, equal to our 690 sazhens. Thirty poprishches make a distance of approximately 41 versts.

concerning you. You will see Rome and pray in the church of the holy Martyr Boniface and Aglaida; from there you must sail to Alexandria, and then preach the word of truth in Ethiopia and come to the Omirite city of Nagrān,[17] which has been conquered by Dunaan, king of the Omirites, and is in need of the preaching of apostolic teaching. There, having accomplished great and glorious deeds, you will die and depart to the dwellings of the righteous. Yet you must endure many hardships from the rebellious Jews living in Omir; and you will turn many of them to God, having Him as your good Helper, Who will give you wisdom and instruction. There, too, the Patriarch of Alexandria will ordain you to the rank of archbishop."

Hearing this, blessed Gregory began to say that he was unworthy of what the elder foretold concerning him, and wished to remain longer with the hermit. The clairvoyant man also told Gregory of the vision which Gregory himself had seen: he had seen the chief Apostles Peter and Paul laying an omophorion[18] upon Gregory's shoulders, signifying the grace of the episcopate which Gregory was to receive. Blessed Gregory marveled greatly at the elder's wondrous clairvoyance, from whom even that which he himself had seen in private was not hidden, and said:

16. Schemamonk — a monk who has received the schema. *Schema* — a Greek word (*schema*) meaning image, appearance, rank. The schema is called the highest degree of monasticism, joined with new, most strict vows of self-denial and service to Christ; it is the most perfect separation from the world, a greater desire "to depart and be with Christ" (Phil. 1:2).

17. Omirites — inhabitants of southern Arabia, dwelling near the Arabian Gulf. In the first centuries of Christianity eleven different tribes inhabited Arabia, of which only two — the Omirites and the Sabaeans — professed the Christian faith. The other tribes, being in constant relations with the Jews, mostly adhered to Jewish law. The Omirites were enlightened by Christianity through Theophilus the Indian, second bishop of the Ethiopian capital Axum. — Nagran or Anagran — a vast and populous city on the shore of the Arabian Gulf, whose inhabitants without exception professed the Christian faith.

18. Omophorion — (Greek, "shoulder-bearer") one of the seven episcopal vestments, placed upon the shoulders and hanging down in front and behind, bearing four crosses. Symbolically the omophorion represents the lost sheep, that is, mankind, which the Lord, having found it, took upon His shoulders and joined to His sheep, that is, the Angels. By the crosses the hierarch shows his purpose to follow the Passion of Christ: as He bore His cross upon His shoulder and was crucified, so the hierarch takes upon his shoulders the cross of Christ, not refusing suffering; for the cross is the symbol of suffering.

"Glory to God, Who works thus in those who love Him; may the Lord's will be done!"

After two days the elder sent him on his way, kissing him lovingly; and Gregory departed, grieving to part from such a divine man, burning with a flame of love for him and remembering him continually. From there Gregory came first to Carthage,[19] where he dwelt for a long time, preaching the word of God and healing every kind of illness. Then, at God's command, he set out for Rome and prayed in the church of the holy Martyr Boniface and Aglaida. When he came to the tomb of the holy Apostle Peter and fell to the ground in tears, he had a vision: before him the gates of heaven stood open, and an extraordinary light shone forth. And behold, the holy Apostle Peter, holding a key in his right hand, came out through the gates of heaven and approached him with great glory and a radiant countenance, saying as he looked upon him with a bright gaze:

"I have come here, child Gregory, by the mercy of the Lord. Before this, however, I was with the other Apostles in Nagrān, the Omirite city, standing by those who suffered for our Lord Jesus Christ at the hands of Dunaan the Jew, and strengthening each of them in piety. With God's help, they all resisted the will of the lawless Jew, struggled steadfastly in piety, suffered for the truth, and now dwell in heaven with the fathers who were deemed worthy of immortal honor. I have come to visit this city; but Paul, my brother, the champion of the churches, parted from me in Jerusalem and went to Persia. And you, child, as you walk the good path, strive to please the Lord, meditating continually upon His law, knowing that the life and beauty of this world pass away like a dream and a shadow. You will be blessed if, as you have begun, you complete your course, walking in the will of the Lord; you will bring many to the fear of God. Behold, a throne is

19. Carthage was the most ancient and renowned colony of the Phoenicians in North Africa. It reached the highest degree of power in ancient history and was destroyed in 146 B.C. On the ruins of ancient Carthage, under the first Roman emperors, a new Carthage arose, which existed with great splendor for a very long time. In Carthage the pagan Greco-Roman cult was very strongly developed, and as direct consequences of it, superstitions and sorcery persisted for a long time, and the so-called "magical arts" were cultivated.

already being prepared for you in heaven by the Master Himself, and you will receive your reward with us."

Having said this, the Apostle departed, and the vision ended. Coming to himself, Gregory again fell to the ground, calling himself wretched and sinful. After praying for a long time, he went to his dwelling, and that night in a dream he saw the holy Apostle Paul offering him a vessel of oil; this was a sign of the grace of the priesthood and episcopate appointed for him. In his dream Gregory took this oil from the Apostle's hands, then awoke at once, rejoiced, and sang: "My heart hath poured forth a good word" (Ps. 44:2, 8), for God hath anointed me with the oil of gladness.

After this he left Rome and went to Alexandria, continually turning his heart to God, growing ever more perfect in the virtues and being filled with divine wisdom and understanding, and with great divine gifts. At that time the pious kings reigned: Justin[20] in Greece, and Elesboas in Ethiopia. Dunaan, who ruled in the land of Omir, raised a persecution against the Christians and sought to eradicate the very name of Christ from his kingdom. By deceit he seized the glorious city of Nagrān, where there were believers in Christ, and destroyed an innumerable multitude of Christians: some he burned with fire, others he beheaded with the sword, and he killed the pious prince Arethas together with the most distinguished citizens. Hearing of this, the pious kings Justin and Elesboas greatly grieved over the innocent blood of the Christians that had been shed. Justin wrote to Elesboas,[21] urging him to wage war against the impious Dunaan, in order to avenge the innocent blood that had been shed. The most praiseworthy king Elesboas, filled with zeal, gathered all his army and went to war against the impious king Dunaan.[22] In this great war, with God's help, Elesboas defeated Dunaan's forces and utterly destroyed his whole army, while

20. Justin I, Byzantine emperor, reigned from 518 to 527 A.D.

21. The Byzantine emperor took a warm interest in the fate of the inhabitants of the city of Najran, since this city, having been conquered in 25 A.D. by the Roman commander Aelius Gallus, was under the protection of the Roman emperors.

22. The king of Ethiopia considered it his duty to come to the defense of the Omirite Christians, because they had received Christianity itself from Ethiopia and, in all probability, were in ecclesiastical dependence on the Metropolis of Axum.

Dunaan himself and his kinsmen he beheaded with the sword. Having taken possession of Dunaan's kingdom, Elesboas zealously set about cleansing it of Jewish and pagan errors, spreading throughout it the glory of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many of the Jews and pagans dwelling in Omir wished to be baptized, but they had neither bishop nor priest nor deacon, nor a single cleric, because Dunaan had destroyed the entire ecclesiastical order of the hierarchy. Then blessed Elesboas made a request of the Patriarch of Alexandria. Having related in detail how God had helped restore Christianity in the land of Omir, the king entreated the patriarch to choose a wise and virtuous man, learned in Holy Scripture, ordain him bishop, and send him to them in the province of Omir with all that was needed for the church. When this letter arrived in Alexandria, the patriarch and all the Christians rejoiced at the help God had sent from on high to the Christians against the impious, and he began diligently to seek a worthy man, so that, having consecrated him bishop, he might send him promptly to Elesboas. Many men were brought before the patriarch, but not one of them seemed worthy of the episcopal dignity. Then the patriarch turned in fervent prayer to God during the night, asking the Lord Himself to choose and show him a man worthy of undertaking such a ministry. During his prayer the holy Apostle Mark appeared to the patriarch in a vision, commanding him to find the deacon Gregory, who had recently come to Alexandria and was lodging with a certain Leontius, to consecrate him bishop and send him to Elesboas, since it was for this very purpose that the Lord had brought Gregory there. In the morning the patriarch at once sent people to find Leontius's house; when they found it, he summoned Gregory, who was staying there, and asked him who he was and whence he had come. Then the patriarch told him of his vision and the need of the Church, and urged him to accept the episcopal dignity. Gregory, remembering the words of the hermit who had foretold at Mediolanum that he would receive the rank of archbishop through ordination by the Patriarch of Alexandria, wept and said:

"May the Lord's will be done: do as you wish, vladyka, according to the Lord's command."

The Patriarch at once ordained Gregory to the rank of presbyter, and then consecrated him Archbishop. During this a wonderful miracle took place: during the service and the consecration, Gregory's face changed and became luminous, like fire, shining with the grace of the Holy Spirit, and from his vestments there rose smoke of fragrant myrrh and a fragrance which filled the whole church with its sweet odor. This continued throughout the whole service, all eyes were fixed on St. Gregory, and all marveled at such a miracle. The envoys of Elesboas also saw this and, astonished, afterward related all that they had seen to the king. After the ordination and a spiritual conversation with the Patriarch, St. Gregory was dismissed with the envoys of Elesboas, having with him a clergy befitting his rank and everything necessary for the establishment of a church. Soon they reached Ethiopia, and then the land of Omir. King Elesboas rejoiced greatly at the coming of Gregory, and still more when he learned that Gregory had been chosen by Divine Revelation and that the grace of the Holy Spirit had manifested itself wondrously in him during the ordination.[23] He received Gregory with great honor, welcomed him kindly, and placed the whole region at his disposal. Going about with Gregory through the cities of the land of Omir, the king built new churches, adorned the tombs of the holy martyrs slain for Christ by the impious Dunaan, and brought unbelievers to baptism. In the city of Nagrān, Elesboas appointed the son of the martyr Arethas as prince and built there a magnificent church in honor of the Resurrection of Christ, another church in honor of the Most Pure Theotokos, and a third in the name of the holy martyr Arethas and those who suffered with him, not far from the house where the holy martyr had once lived. And in other cities many churches were built, which Gregory himself consecrated, appointing presbyters and deacons to them and entrusting to them the good flock of Christ's sheep. The blessed King Elesboas remained in the land of Omir for almost 36 months after the death of Dunaan, and when he had set everything in good order there, he desired to return to his throne in the land of Ethiopia. Gathering together with St. Gregory all

23. Cheirotonia: ordination, the conferral of some sacred rank.

the nobles, princes, boyars and counselors, he began to take counsel with them as to what pious, wise, meek and God-fearing man to choose and anoint to the kingdom of Omir. All the counselors answered the king:

"Whom you know, and whom God reveals, him appoint, for we have no one like you in wisdom and worthy of the royal crown."

Then the king, turning to the archbishop, said:

"This matter is yours, honorable father and our teacher! Here before your face are all the princes, nobles and warriors, small and great; whomever you wish, summon, and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ anoint him to the kingdom, and we who have come from Ethiopia, if God is pleased, would wish to return home."

The holy archbishop answered:

"You have wisely provided, pious king: as your heart is in the hand of God, so your word is given to you from God. It is always good, in every matter, first to inquire of the Father in heaven, and to do as He commands."

Having said this, the blessed one rose from his place, withdrew a little from them, and, turning to the east, knelt down. Lifting his eyes and mind to heaven and raising his hands upward, he prayed fervently and for a long time, that God, who knows the life and thoughts of each, would point out to them a worthy man for the kingdom. During the archbishop's prayer, suddenly an invisible power of the Lord lifted into the air a certain man, by name Abramius, and set him before King Elesboi. All cried out in fear for a long time:

"Lord, have mercy!"

But the archbishop said:

"Here is the one whom you asked to anoint to the kingdom; leave him here as king, we will be of one mind with him, and God will help us in everything."

And there was great joy among all at this providence of God. After this King Elesboi took the man Abramius, revealed by God, led him into the church of the Most Holy Trinity, which was in the royal city of Afar, placed upon him the royal purple[24] and set a diadem upon his

head.[25] Then St. Gregory performed the anointing over him and offered the Unbloody Sacrifice for the kings and for all the people, and both kings received the Divine Mysteries from the hands of the archbishop. At the conclusion of the celebration, all those present cried out:

"Many years to Elesboi, king of Ethiopia! And to Abramius, Christ-loving king of Omirite, many years!"

And again they repeated together for both:

"To Elesboi and Abramius, pious and God-loving kings, many years!"

And they sang the acclamation of many years three times. Then all cried:

"To Gregory, our most holy archbishop, our mentor and teacher, peaceful, healthy and many years! To the whole Christian host and to all faithful people, many years!"

Then, entering the royal palace, all made merry and feasted, rejoicing in the Lord God, their Savior, and in their pious kings.

Elesboi remained yet thirty days in the land of Omirite, instructing and admonishing the new king in piety, and to rule and govern the kingdom justly and to obey in all things the most holy archbishop Gregory, his spiritual father. Choosing 15 thousand brave men from the Ethiopian army, Elesboi left them to the new king for the help and defense of the kingdom, and returned to Ethiopia. Here, after a short time, leaving his earthly kingdom, he withdrew into the desert, where near a certain monastery he shut himself up in a dark cell and did not come out of it until his death, receiving food through a window from the monks who lived there; and having lived for a long time yet in the severe life of an ascetic, he passed into the Kingdom of Heaven.[26] So noble and wealthy a king left to all an example of humility and voluntary poverty! After his death the monks related the following incident. A young brother, sent from the monastery on obedience, often stopped at a tavern, where, drinking wine, he fell into the sin of unclean carnal

24. Porphyra: a purple, costly garment, usually constituting the outer, ceremonial vestment of sovereigns.

25. Diadem: a band which the ancient kings wore on the head, the royal crown.

26. The repose of the Blessed Elesbaan, King of Ethiopia, took place around 553–555 A.D. His memory is celebrated by the Church on October 24.

passion. And one day, having committed the usual sin and returning through the desert to the monastery, he entered an impassable place, and here a large serpent rushed at him to sting him. The monk fled and turned this way and that, wishing to escape the serpent, but the serpent quickly overtook him. When at last the monk was so hemmed in that there was nowhere left to run, the serpent rushed to devour him, but then the monk, remembering the blessed king Elesboi, turned to the serpent and said:

"By the prayers of the righteous and most holy Elesboi, depart from me."

The serpent, as if ashamed at the holy name of Elesboi, stopped and, by God's command, receiving a human voice, said to the monk:

"How can I spare you, when an Angel of God appeared to me and commanded me to devour you for your impurity and sins, since you, having vowed to labor for the Lord in purity, defile your body with sin and thereby anger the Holy Spirit."

The monk, hearing the serpent speaking with a human voice and rebuking his deeds, remained silent, trembling, and with an oath besought the serpent to spare him. The serpent said to him:

"Why do you adjure me? Swear first to me that you will no longer fulfill your carnal desire, and then I will leave you."

The monk began to swear, saying:

"I swear by God, who dwells in heaven, and by the prayers of the honorable king Elesboi, that I will no more anger my Lord, whom I have now angered by carnal impurity."

As soon as the monk had said this, suddenly fire fell from heaven and consumed the serpent before him. Overcome with fear and trembling, the monk went to his monastery, and he sinned no more, but ended his life in pure repentance.

During the reign of the pious king Abramius, Archbishop Gregory, having set bishops, learned and eloquent men, in many cities, advised the king to command the Jews and pagans who were in his land to be baptized, or otherwise to hand them over to the death penalty. After a royal decree to this effect was issued, a multitude of Jews and pagans, with their wives and children, out of fear of death began to approach

holy baptism. Then the elders and most skilled in the law among the Jews, gathering from all the cities, held a secret assembly, consulting what they should undertake, and reasoned among themselves:

"If we are not baptized, then by the king's order we shall be killed, both we and our wives and children."

Some of them said:

"So that we may not die a premature death, let us fulfill the king's will, but in secret keep to our faith."

Others advised holding openly, not hypocritically, to their Jewish law, so that, having escaped the human hand (as they said), they would not fall into the hands of the Avenger, God, and, what is worse, perish. Some objected:

"We see that our God does not demand of us this feat, for He delivered our pious king Dunaan and all his army into the hands of Elesboi; and what we should do, we do not know."

Others said:

"If we wish both to keep our law and to remain unharmed, let us secretly leave this land one by one, each taking what is his, so that we do not lose our soul along with the body."

Others objected:

"If we should wish to flee, the Christians will see us and destroy us with death."

And all were at a loss as to what to do. Among them was one most wise teacher of the law, named Ervan, who knew the whole Old Testament and was very eloquent; he said to them:

"You are all speaking in vain, and what you propose cannot be accepted. But if you wish to hear me, let us go together to the king and to Archbishop Gregory, and let us say that they should appoint from among themselves whatever teachers they wish to contend with us concerning faith and law. If they overcome us, we shall of our own will become Christians; but if they are shown to be in error, they themselves will see that they unjustly urge us to turn away from our law. Let us test them and learn what their faith is. If it is true, then we shall believe that the Messiah has already come, though we did not know it.

But if their faith proves false, then it will be clear to us that we die for God, and we shall accept death with zeal."

When Ervan had spoken, they were all afraid and said:

"We see that you are helping the Christians. Do you not know that our faith is true? How can we abandon it?"

Ervan answered:

"I have spoken no deceitful word to you, brethren. But know that in one way or another you will be compelled to be baptized. If you do not heed me, then I shall be blameless before each of you; for even if you do not test their faith through disputation, you will still have to accept it without testing and do as they command. And if you do not accept their faith, they will kill you."

All of them, hearing this, obeyed Ervan, and, writing a petition, they sent it to the king. The king, having read it, was greatly angered and already wished to put them all to death, but he restrained himself, not wishing to undertake anything without the counsel of Gregory, to whom he gave the petition. The Blessed One, having read it, said:

"The Jews speak well and commendably, that it is better to believe of one's own free will, through conviction, than by force. Leave them alone, O King. Let them first dispute with us, and then do with them as you wish."

The king consented to the counsel of the hierarch, and the Jews were given forty days to prepare for the disputation, so that they might find for themselves whatever teachers they desired and come to the disputation without fear. When the term had passed, a countless multitude of Jews gathered, having with them not a few of the wisest rabbis[27], learned in the law and prepared for the disputation. The disputation concerning the faith took place in the capital city of Afar, in the presence of the king with all his senate, the archbishop with the entire clergy of the Church, and a numerous Christian people who had come to hear the disputation. The Jews came to it with their scribes, scholars and teachers. The Jews set before the bishop Ervan as their chief orator, one who knew the law and the prophetic books well and was

27. Rabbi: a Jewish teacher.

skilled in philosophy. When, at a given sign, silence had been established, the conversation and disputation began between the archbishop and Ervan[28].

The substance of the disputation was as follows:

After a long silence, during which all had prepared themselves to attend to the conversation, the holy Archbishop Gregory began to speak to the wise Jewish teacher Ervan and to their whole assembly as follows:

"When the night has passed and the Sun of Righteousness has shone forth, why do you dispute, opposing His Light and not believing in Him?"

Ervan said:

"If the Sun of Righteousness has shone forth, and we oppose its light, as you say, believing in the true God, then all the more do you, as pagans holding an alien teaching, oppose the light of truth, reproaching the Divine law given to us by God."

The archbishop answered:

"We are from the pagans. But whose creation and handiwork are we?"

Ervan answered:

"Clearly, we are God's creation and handiwork." The archbishop said:

"If we, like you, are God's creatures, then what greater advantage have you gained over us?"

Ervan objected:

"That which we have in comparison with the Egyptians."

"It is well that you recalled the Egyptians," answered the archbishop. "Then show your superiority over them!"

Ervan said:

"Have you not read of the great wonders in the land of Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, which God worked through Moses when Israel went out: He drowned the Egyptians and saved Israel?"

28. Concerning these disputations, as St. Demetrius writes, in the Chet'i-Minei of Macarius there is a special book, which he has not set forth, owing to the multitude of speeches, the questions and answers proposed, and in general the abundance of reading.

The archbishop answered:

"There is no difference between you and the Egyptians, for their God drowned them in the sea, while for your malice He destroyed you on earth. Having crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, you perished at the landing, ending your life in suffering in the wilderness; for of more than six hundred thousand people, only two, Caleb and Joshua the son of Nun, were granted to see the promised land[29]. In what, then, did God honor you above the Egyptians?"

Ervan asked:

"And to whom did God send manna in the wilderness?" The archbishop said:

"And which seems better to you: the meat you ate in Egypt, or the manna sent in the wilderness?"

Ervan answered:

"It is clear that the manna is better."

The archbishop objected:

"Why, then, did you turn your thoughts backward, desiring the swine's flesh in the pots and the garlic and onions and all the food of Egypt (Num. 11:5), while you despised the manna?"

After this the disputation began concerning the Holy Trinity.

Ervan said:

"How do the Christians confess three Gods: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, when God said at Sinai: 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one, and there is no other God besides Him' (Deut. 6:4)? Do the Christians, then, act contrary to the law by worshipping not one God but three?"

The archbishop, replying, said that we worship the one God, Creator of all, only in three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in one Godhead; and in proof he cited these words of David: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host" (Ps. 32:6). The meaning of this saying, Gregory explained, is this: the Lord is God the Father, His Word is God the Son, the Spirit of His mouth is God the Holy Spirit. Thus three Divine Persons are re-

29. Num. 14:24, 30; Num. 26:65; Num. 32:1; Deut. 1:36.

vealed, yet the Godhead is one, for the Son and the Spirit are of one essence with the Father, co-beginningless, co-eternal, and co-enthroned with Him. Likewise, concerning the cross and the death of the Lord, St. Gregory adduced against the Jews the Old Testament writings, prophecies and predictions, such as: "And thy life shall hang before thine eyes" (Deut. 28:66); "he shall come and put the poisonous tree into his food" (Jer. 11:19); and that the ark of Noah was a type of the cross; the garden of Savek, in which a lamb replaced Isaac in the sacrifice (Gen. 22:13); the staff of Joseph, upon whose top Jacob bowed (Gen. 47:31); Jacob's cross-like blessing of the sons of Joseph (Gen. 48:13–15); the staff of Moses, which divided the sea (Ex. 14:11–29); Moses' raising of his hands for the victory over the Amalekites (Ex. 17:8–14); the bronze serpent lifted up in the wilderness (Num. 21:4–9); the tree that sweetened the bitter waters at Marah (Ex. 15:22–26); and many other mysterious predictions contained in the law. The disputation continued until evening, each side argued vigorously, and each gave objections to the other. Nevertheless, the archbishop proved the victor in all the arguments, because the Holy Spirit spoke through him, as it is written in Scripture: "For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking in you" (Mt. 10:20). Since evening had come and the disputation had not yet ended, the king rose from his seat, and so did the archbishop, and the assembly dispersed, deferring the conversation until morning. The Jews surrounded Ervan, rejoicing, embracing and kissing him, praising him for having objected strongly enough against the Christians. To this Ervan said to them:

"Pray that the True God may help us, for you yourselves see what a crafty man the archbishop is, and how hard it is to overcome him."

They encouraged him to speak with him boldly and without fear. In the morning the assembly gathered again, and when the king and the archbishop had arrived, and the Jews came with Ervan, the disputation began anew; but neither on that day, nor on the third, nor on the fourth, nor even on the fifth was the disputation brought to an end. On all these days the king with his whole senate was present at the disputation, listening with pleasure to the speakers and rejoicing in the wisdom and understanding bestowed by God upon his most holy archbish-

op. And indeed there was much to hear and much to remember, when many prophetic sayings were expounded and many mysterious passages of Scripture were explained. In the conversation concerning the Incarnation of Jesus Christ and the Most Pure Virgin, the archbishop cited the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive in her womb and bear a Son" (Is. 7:14). To Ervan's objection that Mary bore only a mere man and not God, the archbishop replied with these words: "And they shall call His name Emmanuel, which means, God with us" (Mt. 1:23).

Ervan said:

"How could a woman's womb contain the awesome greatness of the Godhead?"

The archbishop answered:

"In the same way as the dwelling of Abraham contained God beneath the oak of Mamre, when He came to eat with Abraham (Gen. 18)."

Ervan objected:

"How, then, did the fire of the Godhead not burn the woman's body?"

The archbishop answered:

"As the fire did not burn the bush at Sinai (Ex. 3:2–4), so the Godhead did not harm the virginal womb: the Virgin bore a child, and remained a Virgin."

Ervan objected:

"A birth from a Virgin was illusory and not in reality, for it is impossible that the womb should not be injured in giving birth, and it is clear to all that this is untrue."

The archbishop answered:

"When Habakkuk entered to Daniel in the lions' den, and the doors of the den were shut and sealed with a seal, tell me, how did he enter and leave without opening the doors and without damaging the seals? (Dan. 14:30–40.)"

At the end of the disputation, on the third day, Ervan attempted to flee, but the Jews firmly restrained him, saying:

"If you leave us, we shall all perish. Remain yet, objecting in every way. Will God not help us? And even if we are defeated in the disputation, we have other means of resistance, by which we cannot be overcome."

When Ervan, during the disputation, began to reproach the Christians for worshipping icons, and called the icons idols, and those who bowed before them idolaters and opponents of the Law of God, and said that God had commanded not to make graven images or any likeness[30], then the archbishop asked him:

"When there was the Flood in the days of Noah, how was he saved?"

Ervan answered:

"By the ark, made of wood."

The archbishop objected:

"Could God have saved Noah from the Flood without the ark, or could He not, as you think?"

Ervan answered:

"I think He could, for it is said that with God all things are possible."

The archbishop objected:

"And if God could, why then was the ark needed for the salvation of the righteous man? Does it not follow that Noah should have given thanks for his salvation to the ark, and not to God?"

Ervan answered:

"No. Praise is due to God, not to a soulless creature."

The archbishop said:

"Yet you believe that God accomplished the salvation of Noah by means of a soulless creature, the ark. So also God sends down His grace to us through these visible icons, for although they are soulless, they are appointed for our salvation. Gazing upon the icons, we are lifted up in mind to the archetype and are raised to godly zeal. We do not depict an idol, but the Lord Jesus Christ according to His humanity, not according to His Godhead, which cannot be described. And as

30. The second commandment of the Decalogue.

Noah, having built an altar, gave thanks to God for his salvation in the ark, so also we give thanks to Christ God by painting His image, so that by the bodily contemplation of Him we may be delivered from the mental flood. We acknowledge His humanity, as it were another ark, through which He bore our sins, and, having sanctified us by His Godhead, lifted us up to heaven. Him who was seen by bodily eyes we paint in colors, depicting the most pure likeness of His humanity, and under the form of the bodily likeness we worship also His Godhead, and in Him we honor, with fitting worship, equally the Father and the Holy Spirit."

Ervan, continuing to revile the holy icons, said:

"I marvel at your Christian fables, which declare that God sends His grace to icons painted on walls and boards, which never walked and never spoke."

The archbishop, in refutation, asked:

"Tell me, Ervan, why did God give to the mantle[31] of Elijah His grace, which He did not give to Elisha, and prefer the soulless mantle to the living prophet, since the prophet could not himself cross the Jordan, but divided the waters with the mantle and passed over on dry ground; and whatever miracle Elisha could not perform, the soulless mantle could do (4 Kgdms. 2:13–15)? Why did He not give this to Moses, who performed wonders in the land of Egypt, but bestowed a miraculous power upon his staff, and by it turned water into blood, divided the sea, and performed many other terrible and glorious wonders? Moreover, the tabernacle[32], the ark of the Covenant[33], the golden pot[34] with the manna[35], the tablets and the rod of Aaron, the altar, the

31. Mantle (*milot'*): a sheepskin, a fleece; an outer garment, a cloak.

32. Tabernacle (*skiniya*): the portable temple of the Jews, built by them during their wanderings in the wilderness, by the command and direction of the Lord, and which existed among them until Solomon built the magnificent temple in Jerusalem.

33. Ark of the Covenant: the chest, constructed by Moses, which formed the holy object of the Jewish people. It was made of cedar wood and overlaid, both inside and outside, with the purest gold. In it were kept the tablets (stone tablets) on which the commandments of the Decalogue were written, a golden vessel with manna, by which the Jews were nourished during their wanderings in the wilderness, and the rod of Aaron, which put forth blossoms.

34. Stamnos: a vessel in the form of a pitcher.

35. Manna: the miraculous food which God sent down from heaven to the Jews during their forty years' wandering in the wilderness.

censer and the seven-branched candlestick: did they not have the grace of God, although they were dead, made of visible and tangible things by human hands? Yet they were overshadowed by the glory of God, filled and surrounded by the cloud, and were inaccessible to anyone except the priests and the Levites, and no one could touch them, for they were divine and holy. If this was so in the Old Testament, why then do you marvel that in the New Testament grace is given to the holy icons?"

Ervan again objected:

"In the Psalms it is said: 'Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands' (Ps. 113:12). Therefore your icons also are idols, for they are made by human hands."

The archbishop replied:

"I do not object at all that the idols of the pagans, who do not know God, are idols, for they are likenesses of those who lived godlessly in every kind of filth: sorcerers, magicians, murderers, adulterers, and all of them perished from such a life by an evil death. In memory of them some made idols, and the following generation, seduced and blinded by Satan, turned them into gods and bows down to them. You did the same, worshipping images, sacrificing to them your sons and daughters, shedding innocent blood, the blood of your sons and daughters whom you sacrificed to the Canaanite idols, which are idols. But as for what we now paint, images of the saints of God, these are not idols but honorable icons. We paint the likeness of those who knew God, believed in Him, pleased Him by righteousness, were honorable men, holy and beloved of God, and by the grace of God performed a multitude of miracles. They raised the dead, healed the sick, the blind, the lame, the paralyzed, cleansed the lepers, cast out demons; their end was honorable, and their memory eternal and glorious: 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints! Their memory shall not be shaken forever; the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance' (Ps. 115:6, 111:6)."

When Ervan again slandered, saying that icons do not differ in any way from idols, the archbishop said:

"Your garment, Ervan, and the tabernacle, both are made of wool and linen; do they have equal power? Does your staff and the flowering

staff of Aaron have the same honor? The jug that you have at home and the pot (vessel) with the manna: are they equal? The box in which you keep what the body needs and the ark of the Covenant: do they have equal glory? The fire and the oil that you light in the house for illumination, will you compare them with the golden candlestick? The house in which you live and the temple built by Solomon: will you make the one like the other? By no means, but you honor all this incomparably more, because at times the divine grace abode upon those. Understand in this way also that one thing is an idol, an image of a defiled face cast down into hell, and another thing is the icon of a holy servant of God, from which the divine grace of the Lord pours out upon us through the prayers of the one depicted on it."

Ervan also spoke of the Angels, that they are bodiless, as it is written: 'Who makest Thy angels spirits' (Ps. 103:4), and that nevertheless Christians, without shame, paint them on icons, giving bodiless spirits a fleshly image. To this the archbishop answered:

"You do not know what you are saying, for we learned to paint Angels from you yourselves."

Ervan objected:

"Among us there has never been this."

The archbishop asked:

"You have studied the whole Old Testament and did not learn this?"

Ervan answered:

"I swear by the Lord that I know of no time when images of Angels were painted and venerated among us!"

The archbishop said to this:

"Truly, you yourselves began this matter: when Solomon built the temple for God, did he not make over the sanctuary Cherubim of glory overshadowing the altar? And also over the first doors of the sanctuary and over the second, did he not place Cherubim? And in the tabernacle established by Moses, were there not images of Cherubim over the ark of the Covenant, and were not the faces of the Cherubim embroidered on the veils? And were not all these images of Angels honored by you together with the tabernacle and the temple? If, then, having depicted

bodiless beings, you honored them, why do you reproach us, who depict and honor the faces of those saints who in the flesh pleased God?"

This and much similar to it was said on the fourth day of the disputation. When evening came, and the king and the archbishop rose from their places, the assembly dispersed, in expectation that in the morning the disputation would be concluded and it would be possible to see the triumph of the victor. The Jews rejoiced for Ervan, that he answered well and asked questions of the archbishop, and, encouraging him, they said to him:

"You are contending well; do not be afraid, but stand even more firmly, for we see that God is with you. Do not fear in your heart, since it is evident that the king listens to you both with pleasure."

But Ervan answered them:

"Brethren, that man, as I see, far surpasses me in wisdom and in the art of speaking, and it is impossible for me to overcome him. You yourselves heard how, refuting and shaming all my arguments, he made them worthless."

In the morning, very early, when the most learned Jews came again to Ervan, he said to them:

"Brethren, I tell you truly that I shall be defeated by the archbishop, for in the night, in a vision, I saw Moses and Jesus, about whom we had the dispute. I saw them as if standing on the roof of some sanctuary and conversing, and I saw Moses bowing before Jesus and holding his hands bent toward his breast, as if they were bound, and standing before Jesus with fear, as before his Lord God. I was amazed at this, and when my lips were opened I said:

'Lord Moses, is what you are doing good?'

He, turning, stopped me, saying:

'Be silent. I do not sin in worshipping my Master, for I am not of those like you, and I confess my Creator and Lord. Why do you trouble the righteous archbishop, resisting the truth? On the coming day you will be defeated by him and will bow down, as I did, before the Lord Jesus Christ.'

This I saw, brethren, and what it means I do not know. However, I will continue to contend with the archbishop, insisting on our law until God Himself arranges things as He wills."

Many, hearing this, were doubtful and perplexed. When the day came and the council was assembled, the king appeared with the senate, the archbishop with the clergy, and a great crowd of people gathered; there appeared also Ervan with the teachers of the Law who assisted him, and the disputations began again, as on the former days. A learned notary[36] of the archbishop, whom he had brought with him from Alexandria, being a stenographer, was present there and recorded all the speeches delivered both by the archbishop and by Ervan. By the help of the Holy Spirit, who worked in the mouth of the archbishop, the side of the adversaries was defeated, while ours prevailed in the Lord. The archbishop emerged victorious in all the arguments, while Ervan grew weaker, and the Jewish teachers of the Law who assisted him grew weaker too; yet malice had blinded them, their ears heard poorly, and their eyes were closed to the truth. It was necessary that after the words of the Hierarch there should follow the power of faith and a miracle which would convict those embittered by malice and put their unbelief to shame; and this indeed came to pass in the following manner.

When Ervan was already utterly defeated in the disputation, he cried out:

"Why do we waste time in long arguments! I will bring these disputations to an end. If you wish, Archbishop, that I should believe in Jesus as the True God, show me Him alive, that I may see Him and speak with Him; then I will acknowledge that you Christians have overcome and defeated us."

When Ervan said this, the assembly of the Jews cried out:

"We beg you, teacher, do not be seduced, lest you become a Christian; be stronger still and stand firm in the truth. You know that there is nothing more true than the One God of our fathers."

Ervan said to them in anger:

36. Notary: a shorthand writer; this name was given both to the imperial secretaries who recorded the minutes of the most important state deliberations, and to the secretaries of patriarchs.

"What empty things are you saying? Listen: if He convinces me that He of whom the prophets foretold exists, what more do you expect?"

The archbishop, seeing that he spoke sincerely and not flatteringly, said to him:

"Ervan, you present a great temptation, and your request is beyond human strength, for you ask not of men but of God. Yet that you and those with you may believe, and that the hearts of the faithful may be strengthened, God is mighty to do this. Only tell me plainly: how do you wish me to convince you?"

Ervan answered:

"Entreat your Lord, if He is in heaven as you say; let Him come down here and appear to me, that I may speak with Him, and I swear by the Lord that I will at once believe in Him and be baptized."

When Ervan had said this, the whole multitude of Jews cried out:

"Indeed, Archbishop, prove to us in deed the truth of your words; show us your Christ, so that, having nothing to answer, we may in fear believe in Him."

And all, with cries, pressed St. Gregory to show them Christ tangibly, if He lives after His crucifixion and death. Then the Jews began to say among themselves:

"If the archbishop shows us his Christ, what shall we do? Woe to us, we shall have to become Christians against our will."

Others said:

"If he shows us Christ, why should we not believe in Him?"

Some, however, said this:

"How is it possible to show Him who, as a slain man, died, and so many years have passed since the day of His death? Where can His body and spirit be found, when all the bones and sinews in the tomb have long since crumbled to dust?"

The archbishop, reflecting on the importance of the matter and seeing their strong insistence, placed all his soul's trust in the Lord, and reasoned within himself that if he did not entreat the Lord Christ to fulfill their request, then the opposing side would triumph strongly; the Jews would appear victorious and the Christians as though defeated,

and the enemies would mock and revile the Christians. And with hope he said to the Jewish assembly:

"If Christ wills it, I shall be able to show Him to you. But you well know that if I show Him to you and you do not desire to believe in Him, the sword will at once destroy you all. And if, by my unworthiness, I am not able to show you my Lord, then act further according to your own will."

The Jews, hearing this, became both sad and glad: sad, because they feared that if he showed them Christ they would have to believe in Him against their will; glad, in the hope that he would not show them Christ, and then they could freely remain in their faith. But the archbishop's words were pleasing to Ervan and to the wisest teachers of the Law who were with him, and they said among themselves:

"It is impossible that a man slain by our fathers, dead and sealed in a tomb, stolen by his disciples, could be alive after 500 years."

St. Gregory, knowing the words of the Lord spoken in the Gospel: "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, and say to this mountain, 'Remove from here to there,' it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you" (Mt. 17:20), and keeping them in his mind, and having unshaken faith in God and firmly trusting in Him, rose from his place and withdrew a little, to a place more convenient for prayer. The emperor, however, with all the people, marveled and wondered at such great boldness toward God and faith in the archbishop, that he dared to undertake so terrible a thing, and they awaited in fear what would happen. The Hierarch, withdrawing a little from the assembly, signed himself with the sign of the Cross and began to pray. Humbly bending his knees and lifting his whole self toward heaven, he prayed long and loudly, in the hearing of all present, recalling all the mysteries of the incarnation of the Word of God and the whole life of Christ among men, from the Nativity to His voluntary sufferings, the Cross, death, the three-day resurrection and the ascension into heaven. And at last he said:

"Reveal Yourself, O Master, alive to these people, hardened and blinded by malice; reveal Yourself for the sake of Your Holy Name, and let them see with their eyes Your life-giving humanity, with which You

clothed Yourself for our sake and with which You ascended into heaven, so that, seeing You, they may believe in You as the True God and in the Father who sent You, and in the Holy Spirit."

As he was finishing his prayer, and all were looking at him attentively, suddenly there was an earthquake, and a terrible thunder was heard from the east, so that the earth trembled, and all fell down from fear. When all, having recovered from their fear, gradually rose and lifted their eyes toward the east, they saw that the heavens had opened and a bright cloud with fiery flame and rays of the sun was descending from there to the earth. In the midst of the cloud there was seen a Man, the fairest of all the sons of men, our Lord Jesus Christ, shining indescribably in His face and gleaming in garments like lightning. With a particular motion, treading upon the cloud, He drew near to the earth and stood above, opposite the archbishop, upon the cloud, drawing the eyes and hearts of all to Himself by His beauty, which no tongue can express. From fear of His glory, which was unbearable to look upon, as once on Tabor the disciples fell, so now all fell prostrate on the ground: the emperor with his nobles and all the people, from small to great. The Jews, seized with great trembling, rushed hither and thither and set out to flee, for the illumination of the divine light scorched them, and the glory of the Lord, which they could not behold, seized them with great fear. But they could neither flee nor even move from their place, for an invisible power held them. The archbishop, strengthened from above, cried out loudly to Ervan:

"Ervan, here is He of whom you have heard many spoken accounts; look upon Him and believe that there is One Holy, One Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father, amen."

Ervan, however, grew pale as death and could say nothing in reply. And the voice of the Lord was heard:

"At the prayer of the bishop, the One crucified by your fathers heals you."

Hearing this voice, they all trembled still more and fell to the ground, seized with terror. And as once Saul, on the way to Damascus, when light from heaven shone around him and a voice sounded from above, fell to the earth and, with his eyes open, saw nothing (Acts 9:3–

8), so they too were blinded: though their eyes were open, they saw nothing, but only mourned and wept bitterly. After what had taken place, a divine sound was heard before the face of the Lord, and a bright cloud that was beneath the feet of the Lord hid Him from the eyes of all; it gradually thickened on all sides in His wake as He rose higher, until the divine glory vanished in the sky and all that had been seen was hidden from sight. The emperor and all the Christians for a long time boldly cried out after the Lord:

"Lord, have mercy!"

The honorable archbishop lay face down on the ground, offering prayer to the Lord for the people with tears. After this, all who were assembled at the council, the emperor with the senate and the people, began to honor Archbishop Gregory with special esteem and reverence, marveling at his holiness and the power of his prayer. The Jews, however, asked one another:

"Brother, do you see anything?"

And each answered:

"I see nothing."

And all cried out to Ervan:

"Teacher, what shall we do?"

Ervan answered:

"Have you alone been blinded by seeing the God of the Christians, or have the Christians also suffered?"

The Christians, hearing this, said:

"By the grace of Christ we see well, and our eyes are now healthier than they were; you alone are blind because of your unbelief. 'O God of vengeance, Lord, O God of vengeance, shine forth' (Ps. 93:1). He has destroyed your sight, since, being unworthy, you beheld Him."

Then Ervan, together with all the Jews, began to beseech the archbishop with tears that he would heal their blinded eyes and bestow upon them holy Baptism. The archbishop asked them whether they believed sincerely in the Lord Jesus Christ. And all bore witness that they believed with conviction. Immediately the archbishop, together with the bishops and presbyters who were with him, catechized them and proceeded to perform the mystery of Baptism. As the Jews entered

the holy font,[37] there fell from their eyes as it were a certain scale, and all received sight, both of the body and of the soul; “with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses our Lord Jesus Christ unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10). And all were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, beginning with Ervan, at whose baptism the emperor himself stood as sponsor, and to whom in holy Baptism was given the name Leo. The emperor admitted him into his senate, making him a patrician,[38] as a man intelligent and worthy of honor. Ervan deeply repented of his former error, and was struck with awe, continually recalling in his mind the manifestation of the Lord.

"How is it," he said, "that the Lord Jesus Christ lives, whom our fathers crucified and buried, and who, as we thought, was dead?"

And with tears he cried out:

"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God! Forgive me that I sinned in my ignorance."

Ervan regarded the holy archbishop as an Angel of God, and did not wish to be parted from him. Thus the land of Omirit was enlightened with the light of the holy faith: throughout all the cities and villages were baptized not only Jews but also pagans. And there was great joy throughout the whole land; together with men the Angels also rejoiced over such a conversion and repentance of human souls, and God was glorified, Who desires the salvation of all men.

Afterwards the holy archbishop Gregory advised the emperor to command that the Jews should not live together, but settle among the Christians, so that they might not hold secret assemblies and conspiracies. The emperor issued such a law:

"Let none of the Jews take a husband for his daughter from a Jewish family, but let him take sons-in-law from among the Christians; and let the son of a Jew not take a bride from among the Jewish daughters, but let him seek a Christian one. If anyone dares to transgress the law, he shall be subject to beheading by the sword."

The archbishop did this so that the Jewish people, mingling with the Christians, might within a few years entirely forget the ancient Old

Testament faith and customs. Everywhere there was quietness, complete humility, and piety shone everywhere. The emperor and the archbishop labored diligently before God, performing all-night praises to the Lord Christ, caring for the salvation of human souls and governing the realm mercifully and justly. The pious emperor Abramius, having lived in the land of Omirit for thirty years, died, having been informed of the day of his death by the holy Gregory, and was honorably buried in the city of Afar. A little after the death of the emperor, our holy father Gregory, having kept his flock, establishing the faith upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and having wrought many signs and wonders to the glory of God, ended his life on December 19, and was honorably laid in the same city, in the burial vault of the great church.[39] All the land of Omirit wept over him, and most of all the baptized Jews, because he had been a good and merciful father, pleasing to men and well-pleasing to God, before Whom the holy Gregory now stood among the other holy hierarchs, glorifying with them the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, unto ages of ages. Amen.

* * *

Commemoration of the Holy Martyrs Elias, Provus and Aris

Память святых мучеников Илии, Прова и Ариса

The holy martyrs Elias, Provus and Aris were from Egypt. They confessed the Christian faith, and out of zeal for the glory of God they visited the sufferers for Christ imprisoned in dungeons, consoling them amid their torments and healing their wounds. Once they went to the land of Cilicia,[40] and at the entrance to the city of Ascalon,[41] right at the city gates, they were detained by fierce unbelieving guards, who took them for spies and brought them before the prince Firmilian. At the interrogation before the prince they declared them-

37. Font (*kupel'*): a vessel used in the administration of the mystery of baptism.
38. That is, he enrolled him in the highest estate, corresponding to our hereditary nobility.
39. St. Gregory died around 552 A.D.
40. Cilicia: the southeastern coastal region of Asia Minor.
41. Ascalon: an ancient Philistine city in Palestine, on the Mediterranean Sea.

selves Christians, and for this they underwent cruel torments. Holy Aris was the first to suffer many tortures and was delivered to be burned with fire. Then holy Provus was tortured and beheaded with the sword. Finally, after many sufferings, holy Elias was also beheaded with the sword.[42]

* * *

Commemoration of the Holy Martyrs Polyeuctus and Timothy

Память святых мучеников Полиевкта и Тимофея

The holy martyr Polyeuctus was a native of Caesarea,[43] where he preached about Christ with great success, converting many unbelievers from idol-worship to the holy Christian faith. For his preaching he was seized and cast into prison. After unceasing exhortations to renounce Christ, he was torn across his whole body with iron claws; then his jaw was broken and he was thrown into a red-hot furnace.

At the same time, in Mauritania,[44] the deacon Timothy was preaching the faith of Christ with success. For this he was delivered to many and grievous sufferings. He was cast into prison, tormented by hunger and thirst, and, led out of confinement after fruitless exhortations to offer sacrifice to the idols, he ascended with prayer the prepared blazing pyre and gave up his spirit to God. His relics were honorably laid by the faithful in the Mauritanian region.[45]

* * *

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42. All these martyrs suffered in 308 A.D.
43. Here is meant Caesarea in Cappadocia, in the eastern part of Asia Minor.
44. Mauretania: a Roman coastal province in North Africa.
45. The holy martyrs Polyeuctus and Timothy the deacon suffered at the beginning of the 4th century.

THE TWENTIETH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 20

20 декабря

New Calendar December 20 · Old Calendar January 2 (civil dates)

Suffering of the Holy Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-Bearer

Страдание святого священномученика Игнатия Богоносца

At the time when Trajan ascended the Roman throne[1], the bishop of the Church of Antioch was St. Ignatius, called the God-Bearer by name and by his deeds, who had received the episcopate after St. Evodius, the successor of the Apostle Peter. The splendid capital of Syria was the greatest city after Rome within the bounds of the Roman Empire, and had about 200,000 inhabitants. It was the field of the preaching labours of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and after their death the activity of the holy Apostle John in Asia Minor also touched it. Today Antioch is represented by the poor little town of Antakya in Asiatic Turkey, lying some 10 versts from the sea. – The holy Apostle Peter governed the Church of Antioch from 47 to 67 A.D.; his successor, the holy Apostle Evodius, until 68 A.D.; St. Ignatius the God-Bearer from 68 to 107 A.D. Concerning this Divine Ignatius the God-Bearer it is related that when he was a child[2], and the Lord Jesus Christ lived on earth among men and taught the people about the Kingdom of God, once the parents of Ignatius, standing in the midst of the people, listened to the words of God proceeding from the lips of the Savior, and had their child with them. Looking upon them, the Lord

1. Emperor Trajan reigned from 98 to 117 A.D.

2. There are no definite data about the place and time of the birth of St. Ignatius, nor about his early upbringing. He was by birth a Syrian; his Syrian name Nurono means "fiery," and Ignatius has the same meaning, a name considered to be derived from the Latin word *ignis*, fire.

called the lad Ignatius to Himself, set him in the midst of the people, embraced him, and, taking him in His arms, said:

"Unless you turn and become as children, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven; and whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me" (Mt. 18:3, 5; Mk. 9:37; Lk. 9:48).

Thus St. Ignatius was called the God-Bearer, both because he was carried in the arms of the Incarnate God, and also because he bore God in his heart and on his lips[3], being a vessel like the holy Apostle Paul, a chosen vessel to bear the name of God before nations and kings. He was first a disciple of St. John the Theologian[4], together with St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna[5]. Then, by the counsel of all the holy apostles, he was ordained bishop in Antioch, where the Christian name had appeared earlier than in other places[6]. Having taken charge of the Church, he spared no strength in preaching piety, displaying in all things apostolic zeal. This holy hierarch established the custom in the Church of singing the Divine hymns in two choirs or choruses, after the likeness of the Angelic choirs; for, having been granted a divine revelation, he saw the Angelic choirs singing in turn: when one sang, the other was silent, and when the other sang, the first listened; when one finished the hymns, the other began; thus the Angelic choirs glorified the Holy Trinity, as it were passing the chants to one another. Having received this revelation, St. Ignatius established this order of sacred chanting first in his Church of Antioch, and from there this beautiful order was received in all the churches[7]. This God-bearing archpastor

3. The title Theophoros (Θεοφόρος), "God-bearer," which others gave St. Ignatius and which he himself used of himself in his epistles, by his own explanation meant a man "who has Christ in his heart." The account that Jesus Christ held St. Ignatius in His arms first occurs in Symeon Metaphrastes, whence it passed into the Menaion of St. Demetrius. By this account the epithet of St. Ignatius, Θεόφορος (bearing God), was altered to Θεοφόρος (borne by God).

4. St. Gregory the Dialogist writes of St. Ignatius that he was also a hearer of the Apostle Peter, others say of the Apostle Paul. St. John Chrysostom [says that he was taught] by the Apostles both in words and in that which is ineffable. (See the 42nd homily on St. Ignatius.)

5. Ordained by the holy Apostle John as bishop of Smyrna, St. Polycarp was in close friendship with St. Ignatius and shared his cares for the churches of God, and after his death remained "the leader of all Asia." The memory of St. Polycarp is celebrated on 23 February.

6. It is said in Acts 11 of the Apostle Barnabas at Antioch: "for a whole year they gathered in the church and taught a considerable number of people, and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."

was a good administrator of the ecclesiastical order, a perfect minister of Christ's mysteries[8], and afterwards a martyr, given to the beasts to devour, as will be told further on. In a difficult war with the Scythians[9], Emperor Trajan won the victory. Supposing that he had become the conqueror of his enemies with the help of his pagan gods, Trajan wished in gratitude to thank them with sacrifices everywhere, so that the gods might also in future time prosperously order his wars and his reign. Then a severe persecution was raised against the Christians. The emperor learned that the Christians not only refused to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods, but even reviled them, exposing their falsehood, and therefore he commanded that Christians who did not obey his command be put to death everywhere. When this emperor set out for another war against the Armenians and Parthians, it fell to him to be in Antioch, and here St. Ignatius the God-Bearer was slandered before him for worshipping as God Christ, who had been condemned to death by Pilate and crucified on the cross, and for establishing laws concerning the keeping of virginity, contempt for riches, and all that is pleasant in life[10]. Hearing of this, Trajan summoned the saint and, before all his senate, said to him:

"Are you the one called God-Bearer, who opposes our command and corrupts all Antioch, leading it after your Christ?"

The Divine Ignatius answered:

"Yes, it is I."

The emperor asked:

7. This is attested by the church historian Socrates. It is the so-called antiphonal singing, used to this day in church services, consisting of Old Testament psalms or well-known parts of them, performed alternately by two choirs, verse by verse.

8. Throughout a forty-year governance of the Church, St. Ignatius was, in the words of St. John Chrysostom, a model of virtues. During the persecution under Domitian (95–96), as his disciples write, "by the rudder of prayer and fasting, by tireless teaching, by zeal of spirit he resisted the storm, lest any of the faint-hearted or inexperienced should be drowned..." During the calamities and after them "the priest of God enlightened the soul of each by explaining Scripture."

9. This was in 106.

10. Beginning here, the account tells of the martyr's exploit of St. Ignatius. Detailed information about it has been preserved in the records of his martyrdom, written by eyewitnesses, his companions who accompanied him from Antioch to Rome. By general opinion these were the deacons Philo and Agathopus, whom St. Ignatius mentions in his epistles to the Smyrnaeans and the Philadelphians.

"What does your name 'God-Bearer' mean?"

The saint answered:

"He who bears Christ God in his soul is a God-Bearer."

"Then," asked the emperor, "you bear your Christ within yourself?"

The saint answered:

"Indeed I bear Him, for it is written: I will dwell 'in them and walk' (2 Cor. 6:16)." The emperor said:

"And what, in your opinion, do we not always bear our gods in our memory, and have them as helpers against our enemies?"

The God-Bearer answered:

"It grieves me that you call idols gods, for there is one true God, the Creator of heaven, and earth, and sea, and of all that is in them; there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son of God, and His kingdom will have no end. If you had known Him, O Emperor, your purple, and your crown, and your throne would be even more powerful."

"Ignatius!" said the emperor. "Leave off what you are saying and listen rather to my words: if you desire to do what pleases me and to be among my friends, then offer sacrifice with us to the gods, and at once you will be our high priest of the great Zeus[11], and you will be called father of the senate."

The saint answered:

"What benefit is it to me to be high priest of Zeus, when I am the bishop of Christ, to whom I always offer praise and strive to offer myself wholly in sacrifice, so as to have in myself a likeness of His voluntary death."

The emperor said:

"To whom do you wish to offer yourself in sacrifice? To Him who was nailed to the cross by Pontius Pilate?"

The saint answered:

"Let me be a sacrifice to Him who nailed sin to the cross, crushed the ruler of sin, the devil, and by the cross overcame all his power."

The emperor said:

"It seems to me, Ignatius, that you do not have sound reason and correct judgment: you would not be so enticed by the Christian writings

if you understood well how profitable it is to obey the royal will and to offer sacrifices to the gods together with everyone."

The God-Bearer, becoming even more inspired, said:

"Even if you give me to the beasts to devour, or crucify me on a cross, or hand me over to the sword or fire, I will never offer sacrifice to demons. I do not fear death, nor do I seek temporal goods, but I desire only the eternal, and strive in every way only to come to Christ my God, who was pleased to die for me."

Then those who took part in the senate, wishing to expose Ignatius's error, said:

"Behold, you say that your God died; how then can a dead one help anyone, and especially one who died a shameful death? Our gods, however, are truly immortal and are considered immortal."

The God-Bearer answered:

"My Lord and God, Jesus Christ, for our sake became incarnate and for our salvation voluntarily accepted crucifixion on the cross, death and burial; then on the third day He rose, overthrew and cast down the power of the enemy, ascended into the heavens from where He had come down, in order to restore us from our fall and lead us back into Paradise, from which we had been cast out, and He bestowed on us more blessings than we had before. But of the gods you honour, not one has done anything like this; being wicked men, lawless, and having committed much destruction, they left to foolish men only some trifling notion of their divinity. Later, when the veil of falsehood fell from them, it was revealed what they had been and how shamefully their existence came to an end."

When the holy Ignatius said this, the emperor and the senate, fearing that he would shame their gods even more, commanded that he be led away to prison. The emperor himself did not sleep all night, pondering by what death he might take Ignatius's life, and he devised to condemn him to be devoured by beasts, considering this the most cruel death. In the morning he announced this to the senate; all agreed, but advised him to hand Ignatius over to the beasts not in Antioch, lest he

11. Dius, also called Zeus and Jupiter, the chief pagan god of the Greeks and Romans.

become famous among his fellow citizens by accepting a martyr's death for his faith, and lest others, seeing him, be strengthened in Christianity. Therefore they said that he should be led in chains to Rome and there given to the beasts; there, after his long journey's exhaustion, the execution would be even harder for him, and none of the Romans would learn who he was; they would think that one of the malefactors had perished, and no memory of him would remain. This counsel pleased the emperor, and he pronounced the sentence of death upon Ignatius, that in Rome, during a festival, before the assembled people, he should be torn to pieces by the beasts. Thus the saint was condemned by the impious, as if to be a spectacle to angels and men (1 Cor. 4:9).

The God-bearing Ignatius, hearing such a sentence upon himself, cried out:

"I thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast deemed me worthy to bear witness to my perfect love for Thee, and hast been pleased to bind me with iron chains, as Thy Apostle Paul."

He put on his chains with joy, as though they were a beautiful necklace of pearls, a precious adornment with which he desired to rise again in the life to come.[12] The Emperor set out with his army for the war, while the Divine sufferer, bound in heavy chains, was handed over to ten cruel and merciless soldiers and sent to Rome. Leaving Antioch, he fervently prayed for the Church and commended his flock to God. All the faithful wept for him and mourned bitterly, and some, bound to him by ardent love, went with him on his journey. At Seleucia, the seaport near Antioch, St. Ignatius boarded a ship with the soldiers, a vessel which was to sail along the coasts of Asia Minor,[13] and after a long and perilous voyage he arrived at Smyrna. There Ignatius met and greeted St. Polycarp, the Divine Apostle, Bishop of Smyrna, his fellow-disciple, and with him he took comfort in godly-inspired conversation, rejoicing in his bonds and glorying in his chains. For what could be a finer adornment for him than those fetters with which he had been bound for

12. See St. Ignatius's epistle to the Ephesians.

13. This is explained by the fact that the condemned were not sent on a special, dedicated ship, but on whatever vessel happened to be available, which, sailing on its own business, stopped at one place or another.

his Lord? He also saw the other bishops, presbyters and deacons, who flocked to him from the churches and cities of Asia, desiring to see him and to hear the Divine words from his lips. Strengthening Christians in the faith by word and example, and exhorting them above all to guard against the heresies which had then arisen and were spreading, and to hold strictly to the apostolic traditions, St. Ignatius besought Polycarp and the whole Church to pray for him, that he might soon become food for the beasts and stand before the face of the Lord, toward whom his soul was striving. Seeing that they were distressed and did not wish his death or his separation from them, Ignatius feared that the faithful who were in Rome would likewise be distressed, would be unable to endure his being given to the beasts, and would place some obstacle in his way, perhaps lifting their hands against those to whom it had been commanded that he be delivered to the beasts for food, and thereby closing against him the open door of martyrdom and his desired death. He therefore resolved to send them a request to pray for him, so that the path of his sufferings would not be cut short, but that he might soon be torn by the beasts and pass over to his beloved Master.

He wrote thus:

Ignatius, the God-bearer, to the Church that has obtained mercy through the majesty of the Most High Father and of His Only Son Jesus Christ; beloved and enlightened by the will of Him to whom all that has come to pass through the love of Jesus Christ our God is pleasing; to the Church that presides in the chief place of the region of Rome, worthy of God, worthy of renown, worthy of felicitation, worthy of praise, worthy of desire, pure, and foremost in love, bearing the name of Christ, bearing the name of the Father, which I also greet in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father; to those who are united with one another in flesh and spirit in every commandment of His, who have received the fullness of the grace of God without division, and who are kept pure from every alien color[14]: I wish you abundant joy in Jesus Christ our God. Through prayer to God I have received what I had asked for much, that I might see your God-worthy faces. Bound for

14. That is, false teaching.

Christ, I hope to kiss you, if the will of God deems me worthy to reach the end. The beginning has been well laid; shall I be granted the grace to obtain my lot without hindrance? For I fear your love, lest it do me harm, for it is easy for you to do what you wish, but hard for me to attain to God, if you spare me. I desire that you please not men but God, as indeed you do please Him. For neither shall I ever again have so favorable an opportunity to attain to God, nor shall you have one to show yourselves in a better deed, if you remain silent. If you remain silent about me, I shall be God's; but if you show love to my flesh, then I shall have to enter the race again[15]. Do nothing more for me than that I be sacrificed to God now, while the altar is already prepared; and then, in love, form a choir and sing a hymn of praise to the Father in Christ Jesus, that God has deemed the bishop of Syria worthy to be summoned from the east to the west. It is good for me to set from the world unto God, that I may rise in Him. You have never envied anyone, and you have taught others the same. I wish that you confirm by deed what you teach in your admonitions[16]. Only pray to God for me for inward and outward strength, that I may not only speak but also will, and that I may not only be called a Christian but also be one in truth. If I am indeed found to be such, then I may also be called by that name, and only then can I be truly faithful, when the world no longer sees me. Nothing visible is eternal: "the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). Our God Jesus Christ appears in greater glory when He is in the Father. Christianity is not a matter of silent conviction, but of the greatness of the deed, especially when the world hates it. I write to the churches and inform them all that I die willingly for God, unless you hinder me. I beg you: do not show me untimely love. Leave me to be food for the beasts, and through them to attain to God. I am the wheat of God: let the teeth of the beasts grind me, that I may become the pure bread of Christ. Rather, caress these beasts, that they may become my tomb and leave nothing of my body, lest after my death I become a burden to anyone. Then I shall truly be a disciple of Christ, when the world shall not see

15. That is, in the course of this earthly life.
16. St. Ignatius speaks here of the glory of dying for Christ.

even my body. Pray to Christ for me, that through these instruments I may become a sacrifice to God. I do not command you as Peter and Paul did. They are apostles, and I am a condemned man; they are free, and I am until now still a slave. But if I suffer, I shall be a freedman of Jesus and shall rise free in Him. Yet now, in my bonds, I teach not to desire anything worldly or vain. From Syria to Rome, by land and by sea, by night and by day, I already struggle with the beasts, being bound to ten leopards, that is, a company of soldiers, who become only more savage the more kindness is shown them[17]. I learn more from their insults, but I am not thereby justified (1 Cor. 4:9). Oh, that I might not be deprived of the beasts prepared for me! I pray that they may rush upon me with eagerness. I shall entice them, that they may devour me at once, and not, as they did with some, fear and leave them untouched. If they are unwilling of their own accord, I shall compel them. Forgive me; I know what is profitable for me. Only now am I beginning to be a disciple. Neither things visible nor things invisible shall keep me from coming to Jesus Christ. Fire and the cross, herds of beasts, dismemberings, tearings apart, the breaking of bones, the cutting off of limbs, the crushing of the whole body, the cruel torments of the devil, let them all come upon me, only let me attain to Christ. The pleasures of the world will bring me no profit, nor the kingdoms of this age. It is better for me to die for Jesus Christ than to reign over the whole earth: "For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mt. 16:26). Him I seek, who died for us; Him I desire, who rose for us. I am keeping my advantage in view: forgive me, brethren! Do not hinder me from living; do not wish me to die. I want to be God's; do not give me over to the world. Let me go to the pure light: once I have appeared there, I shall be a man of God. Allow me to be an imitator of the sufferings of my God. Whoever has Him within himself, let him understand what I desire, and let him show sympathy to me, seeing what preoccupies me. The prince of this age wishes to seduce me and to destroy my desire, which is directed toward God. Let none of you who are there help him. Rather be mine, that is, God's. Do not be those who call upon

17. An allusion to the gifts which Christians gave to Ignatius's guards to soften their severity.

Jesus Christ but love the world. Let envy not dwell among you. And even if I myself should ask you for something else, do not listen to me: believe rather what I now write to you. I write to you alive, yet burning with the desire to die. My love has been crucified, and there is no fire in me that loves matter, but a living water[18] speaks within me and calls to me from within: "Come to the Father." There is no sweetness for me in corruptible food, nor in the pleasures of this life. I desire the bread of God, the heavenly bread, the bread of life, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who in the last time was born of the seed of David and Abraham. And I desire the drink of God, His blood, which is incorruptible love and eternal life. I no longer wish to live the life of men. This will be fulfilled if you are willing. Be willing, I beg you, that you too may obtain favor. I beg you in a short letter. Believe me; and Jesus Christ, the unerring mouth through which the Father truly spoke, will reveal to you that I speak the truth. Pray for me, that I may attain. I have written this to you not according to the flesh, but according to the mind of God. If I suffer, it means you have loved me; but if I am not found worthy, you have hated me. In your prayer remember the Church of Syria: it has God now as its shepherd in place of me. Jesus Christ alone will be its bishop, and your love as well. As for me, I am ashamed to call myself one of its members, for I am unworthy, being the least of them and an abortion. But if I attain to God, then by His mercy I shall be something. My spirit and the love of the churches greet you, the churches which received me in the name of Jesus Christ, not as a mere passerby[19]. For even those churches which were not on the route of my bodily journey came out to meet me in the city. I write this to you from Smyrna, through the most blessed Ephesians. With me, along with many others, is Crocus, a name dear to me. As for those who went ahead of me from Syria to Rome for the glory of God, I think you already know them: tell them that I am near. All of them are worthy of God and of you; you ought to comfort them in all things. I wrote this to you nine days before the Kalends of September[20], that is,

18. "Living water," that is, the Holy Spirit, who stirs up and strengthens in a martyr's death. See Jn. 4:10; Jn. 7:3.
19. That is, with such love as if Ignatius were their own bishop.

on August 28[21]. Be strengthened to the end in the patience of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Ignatius sent this letter with some of the Ephesian Christians who accompanied him, and they set out for Rome by the shortest route.[8597] After some time the saint himself left Smyrna, escorted by soldiers, and arrived at Troas. There he received the joyful news that the persecution had ceased in Antioch and that peace had been restored to the Church there. Remembering in all his prayers his orphaned church, he asked all the faithful to pray for it; the greater his joy at the tranquility of his flock, the more cheerfully he went to meet death. In this disposition of soul he wrote letters to the Philadelphians (in Coele-Syria) and to the Smyrnaeans, urging the Christians to take an active part in the joyful event of the Church of Antioch; and especially he wrote to St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, asking him to send someone from the clergy to Antioch to comfort the church there, and charging him to write to the other churches that they should do the same.[22] From Troas St. Ignatius sailed to Neapolis (in Macedonia), walked on foot through Philippopolis and Macedonia, visiting churches along the way, teaching in them, instructing and encouraging the weak brethren, and also commanding everyone to live a life of vigilance and sobriety. Having passed through Epirus, St. Ignatius again boarded a ship at Epidamnus and sailed to Italy across the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian seas. When he saw Puteoli (a city in Campania) from afar, he wished to disembark there, so as to come to Rome by the same route by which the Apostle Paul had once traveled to a similar contest. But a strong wind did not allow the ship to reach the shore, and St. Ignatius arrived in one day at the harbor of Portus, not far from Rome. The soldiers hastened to Rome in order to arrive in time for the spectacles, which were already drawing

20. So it was reckoned according to the Roman calendar.

21. In 107.

22. Thus seven epistles of St. Ignatius have been preserved. They were originally written in Greek, but later were translated into Syriac, Armenian, subsequently into Slavonic, and in recent times into Russian. The content of these epistles consists chiefly of exhortations to Christians to maintain the inner and outer unity of the Church, for which St. Ignatius may justly be called the teacher of unity, as he himself considered himself a man destined for unity (in the epistle to the Philadelphians). Moreover, most of them are directed against contemporary false teachings.

to a close.[23] Meanwhile the rumor spread of the arrival of the Bishop of Antioch, and the assembled Christians met him, filled with joy and at the same time deep sorrow. Some hoped to persuade the people to renounce the bloody spectacle of the death of a righteous man. But Ignatius entreated them, out of love for him, not to do this; and kneeling together with the brethren present, he prayed to the Son of God for the churches, for the cessation of the persecution, and for the preservation of mutual love among the brethren who believed. Then St. Ignatius was taken to Rome and delivered, with an imperial order, to the city prefect. He, seeing Ignatius Theophorus and reading the imperial letter, at once ordered that the beasts be prepared. The festive day arrived, and the saint was brought to the place of condemnation; the whole city gathered for this spectacle, for the rumor had spread everywhere that the Bishop of Syria would be given to the beasts. Standing in the arena, the saint turned his bright face toward the people, glorying in his courageous soul and rejoicing that he was accepting death for Christ, and said in a loud voice:

"Men of Rome, who behold my present contest! You know that I do not undergo this punishment because of any evil deed, nor am I condemned to death for any lawless act, but for the sake of my One God, with love for Whom I am embraced and toward Whom I earnestly strive. I am His wheat, and I shall be ground by the teeth of the beasts, that I may become pure bread for Him."

As soon as the saint had said this, lions were let loose upon him. Immediately rushing upon him, they tore the saint apart and devoured him, leaving only the hard bones. And the desire of the saint was fulfilled, that the beasts should be his tomb, and God permitted this to be accomplished according to the wish of the saint. He could have stopped the mouths of the lions before him, as He did for the holy Prophet Daniel in the pit and for St. Thecla also during her execution, for the glory of His Holy Name; yet He did not do so, choosing rather to fulfill the desire and request of His servant than to glorify His almighty

23. These spectacles and games were the so-called Saturnalia, continued and concluded by the Sigillaria; they lasted seven days beginning 17 December, in memory of the golden age which, in the view of the Roman pagans, had existed under the reign of their god Saturn.

power. Such was the death of St. Ignatius Theophorus, such his contest, such his love for God.

When the spectacle was over, the believers in Rome, to whom the saint had written from Smyrna, together with some who had come with him, gathered the remaining bones of the martyr and, weeping inconsolably over him, laid them with honor in a special place outside the city, on the 20th day of December, 107 A.D.[8600]

"We, seeing this with our own eyes," thus the describers of the martyrdom of St. Ignatius relate, "spent the whole night at home in tears, kneeling and praying to the Lord to console us in what had happened. When afterward we slept a little, some of us saw St. Ignatius suddenly appear to us and embrace us; others saw him praying for us; and others saw him covered with sweat, as after great labor, and standing before the Lord. Rejoicing to see this, and considering the dream visions, we sang praise to God, the giver of good things, blessed the holy man, and noted the day and year of his death, so that, gathering on the day of his martyrdom, we might have communion with the ascetic and valiant martyr of Christ."

Learning of the death of St. Ignatius, of his courageous magnanimity, and of how he went to death without fear and with joy for the sake of his God, Christ, Emperor Trajan grieved for him. Hearing also about the Christians, that they are good people, gentle, live temperately, love purity, refrain from all evil deeds, lead blameless lives, and are in no way opposed to his kingdom, but only that they do not have many gods and worship the One Christ, Trajan did not order them to be sought out for execution, but allowed them to live in peace. After this the honorable relics of St. Ignatius Theophorus were transferred with glory to Antioch,[24] for the protection of the city, for the healing of the sick, and for the joy of the whole flock of this shepherd, to the glory of God, the One in Trinity, praised by all forever. Amen.

Kontakion, Tone 3:

The radiant day of thy bright contests foreproclaims to all Him
who was born in the cave: for, desiring to enjoy Him out of love,

thou didst strive to be devoured by the beasts. Wherefore thou wast named Theophorus, O Ignatius most wise.

* * *

Memory of St. Philogonius, Bishop of Antioch

Память святого Филогония, епископа Антиохийского

The blessed Philogonius from an early age zealously studied the Divine Books and, with God's help, became thoroughly acquainted with them; taking the holy teaching as the guiding rule for himself, he shone with the holiness of his life. Philogonius had a wife and a daughter, and being an advocate, he constantly attended the court: there he always defended the wronged, offering them a helping hand and standing against the oppressors of widows and orphans, the poor and the destitute. And he shone with his virtuous life. After the death of his wife, he was raised to the episcopal see.[25] At that time there was great disorder in the Christian Church: although the persecutions of Christians by the pagans had then ceased,[26] even more fierce storms burst over the Church, that is, heretical disturbances began. Philogonius, as bishop and a good shepherd, kept good watch over his flock, and with his wisdom he cut short those disturbances, examining and refuting heretical sophistry. For this St. John Chrysostom also honored him with praise,[27] and he reports about him in greater detail. Thus, living a pious angelic life, St. Philogonius, having governed in a God-pleasing manner the spiritual flock entrusted to him, reposed in peace in the glorious abodes of the Heavenly Father.[28]

24. The Translation of the relics of St. Ignatius is celebrated on 29 January.
25. Philogonius, after the death of his wife, was forcibly taken from the court by the people and, for his justice, was made bishop in 318.
26. The last persecutions of the Christian faith took place under the emperors Maximian and Galerius (305–311) and Licinius (307–324). At this time Philogonius, through his love of truth and justice, successfully defended the Christian faith and the persecuted Christians, and showed himself a confessor. But when the persecuted faith triumphed over paganism from the time of Constantine the Equal-to-the-Apostles, new snares of the enemy of the Church of Christ, the devil, gave rise to the heresy of Arius. Philogonius, elected bishop by the people and from youth having received a good education, zealously exposed the false heretical opinions.
27. A eulogy to Philogonius was delivered by St. John Chrysostom in 386.
28. He reposed in peace about 323.

* * *

Life of St. Daniel, Archbishop of Serbia

Житие святого Даниила, архиепископа Сербского

St. Daniel, Archbishop of Serbia, lived under the Serbian kings Stefan Uroš II Milutin,[29] Stefan Uroš III of Dečani, and Stefan Dušan, in the most glorious time of ancient Serbia. He was descended from a noble family of lords and was the son of wealthy parents,[30] who had a large family of sons and daughters, who, however, died while Daniel was still a child. As a child, Daniel asked his parents to give him to a teacher for book learning, but his father and mother, grieved by the death of their other children, did not wish to part with their son. However, the boy insisted on his own way: he persuaded a relative to help him, and, without his parents' knowledge, went with him to the teacher. The teacher knew whose boy had been brought to him, and he set diligently to his instruction. The child showed extraordinary abilities and diligence, so that he soon surpassed his peers and fellow students in the school and was himself able to teach others.

His parents at first grieved greatly, but when they learned where their son was and how he was progressing, they became reconciled and placed everything in the will of God.

Meanwhile in the youth there began to develop an inclination toward chastity, purity, fasting, vigil, and prayer, toward those virtues by which strong men are distinguished; the ascetic life began to occupy him. He sought encounters with monks, paid them due honor, and entered into conversations about the monastic life, so that soon there kindled in him the desire to become a monk himself, and he prayed to God to be granted the monastic rank. Already at this time, having heard much about the wonders in the holy city of Jerusalem and on the holy Mount Athos, he burned with desire to visit those holy places. But the time for this had not yet come.

When Daniel reached mature age, the Serbian king Stefan Uroš Milutin, hearing of his worthy qualities, summoned him to his court,

29. Milutin reigned from 1262 to 1320.

loved him and drew him near. Despite, however, his noble origin and closeness to the sovereign, Daniel did not grow proud, but also at court conducted himself humbly and did not for a moment abandon the thought of the monastic life.

The pious King Milutin often undertook pilgrimages through his land, visiting churches and monasteries, venerating the holy things and distributing rich alms. On one of these journeys Daniel was in the king's retinue. During a halt at the monastery of the Holy Trinity at Sopoćani[31], Daniel, who had always loved conversation with monks, met one such monk who fully answered to his desires. He found in this monk a good counselor and helper, who agreed to assist the young nobleman in receiving the monastic tonsure.

When King Milutin and his retinue had completed their pilgrimage at Sopoćani, and when all had given themselves over to rest after their labors, the pious youth, with the help of the aforementioned monk, secretly withdrew from the monastery at night. His new guide brought him to the monastery of St. Nicholas at Konculj on the river Ibar; Nicodemus, the abbot of that monastery, received the fugitive from the royal court and tonsured him into the monastic order under the name Daniel.

Having long thirsted for the monastic life, Daniel, when he was granted to receive it, began to fulfill the monastic vows with great zeal. Zealously attending the Church services together with the others, and bearing all the monastery's labors during the day, Daniel at night gave himself in solitude to vigil, contemplation of God and unceasing prayer. His prayer, tears of compunction and repentance, fasting and other ascetic labors soon made him a model for the other monks. The fame of his ascetic feats spread beyond the monastery's bounds. Soon he became known to the Serbian Archbishop of that time, Eustathius II[32], who wished to summon Daniel to himself, being in need of enlightened and pious spiritual persons. Eustathius called Daniel to him more than

30. The year and place of Daniel's birth and his secular name are unknown.
31. Sapocha and the Sapochani are located at the sources of the river Rashka, three hours' journey from Novi Pazar in Old Serbia; now, of the Trinity Monastery, the endowment of the Nemanjić dynasty, only ruins remain.
32. Eustathius II was Serbian archbishop from 1286 to 1304.

once, but the noble monk, accustomed to the monastic life he had long desired, did not wish to part from the place of his tonsure, so that the archbishop was obliged to turn to King Milutin, that the sovereign himself might order the monk to present himself to the archbishop.

Received with favor by Eustathius, Daniel was soon ordained by him to the priesthood as a hieromonk and was retained by the archbishop at his court, which was at the monastery of Žiča[33].

While in the archbishop's service, Daniel continued his ascetic life, in no way violating his monastic vow. At the same time, however, Daniel carried out various commissions of the archbishop and served in matters of church administration. Daniel was distinguished by the beauty of his countenance and a fine voice, and had "the gift from the Lord to speak wisely and intelligently before kings," according to the prophet Isaiah.

Daniel had long desired to see the holy Mount Athos. The first Serbian sovereign, St. Stephen Nemanja, father of the first Serbian archbishop St. Sava, had founded on Athos the Serbian monastery of Hilandar, where Stephen, in monasticism Simeon Nemanja, and his son St. Sava had labored. The Hilandar monastery on Athos therefore became forever the most precious shrine for the Serbs. King Milutin renewed it; in place of the ancient small dwelling he created a wondrous monastery, which stood not far from the sea shore. At the request of the abbot of that time, Cyriacus, Milutin built on the very shore of the sea, to protect the monastery from sea brigands, a *pyrgos*, or fortified tower, with the church of the Savior.

The aforementioned abbot Cyriacus soon died. Archbishop Eustathius and King Milutin, concerned to choose a worthy successor, convened a spiritual council for consultation, which unanimously settled upon the hieromonk Daniel. And so Daniel, who had long desired to see the holy Mount Athos, was appointed directly as abbot of the famous Hilandar monastery, which was already then of great importance for the Serbs.

The time in which it pleased God to raise Daniel to the abbacy at Hilandar was difficult and grievous not only for the holy Mount Athos

but for the whole Greek realm. At that time the Ottoman Turks were already advancing upon Constantinople; they pressed not only in Asia but attempted to penetrate into Europe across the sea as well. The Greek emperors employed every means to defend the Christians against the unbelievers. Besides their own forces, they strove in every way to seek outside help. Thus the Serbian king Milutin helped the Greek emperor Andronicus the Elder against the Turks in Asia. Afterwards the Greek emperor was obliged to resort to mercenary troops, to the Spanish Catalans. These mixed mercenary forces of various peoples did not keep their agreement, soon entered into alliance with the Turks, and from helpers and defenders soon turned into fierce enemies of the Orthodox Christian empire. They plundered, ravaged and burned dwellings throughout the Balkan peninsula. Along the shores of the Greek seas, sea brigands raged, especially the Venetians. As the land enemies, the Catalans, so the sea enemies, chiefly the Venetians, did not leave the holy mountain Athos in peace. Exaggerated rumors of the riches of the Athonite monasteries attracted the marauders, who, showing no mercy to the population, sparing neither rank nor age, took captives, killed and plundered.

The Serbian Athonite Lavra of Hilandar could not escape these brigands, who were Christians but Latins.

It was in such a grievous time that St. Daniel was appointed abbot of Hilandar.

King Milutin and Archbishop Eustathius sent Daniel off with rich gifts for the holy Lavra of Hilandar. St. Daniel, who had long longed to labor on Athos, joyfully began to realize his long-cherished hopes. He gave himself wholly to monastic labors, firmly withstanding all the temptations which the enemy, the devil, variously cast upon the path of his salvation. The example of the abbot and his eloquent admonitions and instructions upheld and spread piety, unanimity, order and mutual love in the monastery.

But in addition to spiritual labors, Abbot Daniel was obliged to undertake labors of outward struggle, to defend the monastery from the

aforementioned brigands, who laid waste and ravaged the whole holy mountain. Many monks and common local inhabitants, women and children, flocked to the strong and well-ordered Hilandar monastery, seeking shelter and sustenance here.

All the monastery's stores were given out for the sustenance of the afflicted population, but these too were exhausted. Hunger spread everywhere around. People and even livestock in the devastated land perished from famine. In view of the unbearable calamity, the monks of Hilandar themselves began to scatter, seeking salvation, but they too fell into slavery to the enemies or died a death of hunger. Only the abbot Daniel, unshaken in firmness, did not lose heart. For three and a half years he held out within the fortified monastery. More than once the enemies approached the monastery gates and battered them, but withdrew without success, promising to return again. Daniel defended it tirelessly together with the people who were in the monastery, and with constant prayer to the Lord God.

In view of the terrible danger that threatened, the solicitous and far-sighted abbot, having taken a pledge and hostages from the people sheltering in the monastery that they would defend it, decided to save its treasures and to relieve the calamity by withdrawing for a time to his patron, the Serbian king Milutin.

Having given a considerable sum of gold to those who remained in the monastery, Daniel, together with several men of the brotherhood, took the sacred vessels and valuables, even the monastery's livestock, and set out for Serbia through lands occupied and laid waste by the enemies. By God's mercy, amid all manner of dangers, he safely made his way to the Serbian capital of that time, the city of Skopje. King Milutin received Abbot Daniel with joy and urged him to remain with him until the danger had passed. But Daniel, having entrusted to Milutin for safekeeping the monastery's treasures and livestock, returned, ready to endure everything, even martyrdom.

On the return journey various dangers again met him from brigands and enemies. In one place a certain lord attacked him and wished to

seize and rob him, but the men with Daniel successfully overcame the assailants, bound the enemy, led him along with them, and released him only beyond the bounds of his domain.

Returning to the Hilandar monastery, Abbot Daniel first of all took care to protect and safeguard the monastery in the future from the enemies, who continued to rage on Athos and in the surrounding lands. Supplying several trustworthy men with money, he sent them to buy bread at the seaport markets and to hire armed men for the defense of the monastery. Having thus secured the monastery's protection, Daniel himself withdrew to the Athonite monastery of Rusik to his spiritual father, for spiritual converse and also for safety, since the enemies sought an opportunity to seize the abbot of Hilandar. Two traitors were found in the Hilandar monastery, who came to Rusik to deliver their abbot into the enemies' hands by deceit. But the far-sighted and perspicacious Daniel succeeded in disarming them, although the enemies, besieging Rusik, tried to burn it and seize Daniel. But God saved Daniel from this danger: the enemies quarreled among themselves and unexpectedly withdrew from the monastery.

Giving thanks to God for deliverance from the threatening danger, Daniel, with his spiritual children and companions, set out for the seashore to the Athonite monastery of Xeropotamou, which had also been established and endowed by St. Sava, Archbishop of Serbia. Here Daniel entered himself and his parents in the synodikon for commemoration, and, having spent several days in prayer, returned to his monastery of Hilandar.

Meanwhile the external enemies who for more than three years had inflicted terrible calamities and devastation began gradually to leave the Mount Athos, and peace little by little began to settle upon it. In subduing and dispersing these enemies, the Greek emperor Andronicus and the Serbian kral Milutin gave their aid.

After peace and tranquillity were restored on Athos, Daniel, who had so tirelessly and diligently defended and guarded the Serbian sanc-

33. The Monastery of Žiča (Žitča, Židča), existing to the present day, is located on the right bank of the river Ibar, not far from its confluence with the Serbian Morava, within the bounds of the present-day Kingdom of Serbia.

tuary, resolved, for the sake of a silent and solitary ascetic life, to lay down the hegumenate of Hilandar, handing it over to his disciple Nikodim, and withdrew to the Athonite monastery of Karyes. There was located the cell of St. Sava for a silent and solitary life according to the rule of St. Sava, in which, living here as a monk, he himself performed prayers, night vigils, prostrations and psalmody. Settling in this cell, Daniel devoted himself wholly to spiritual labors, and the fame of them spread throughout the whole of the Holy Mountain, so that many began to come to him for spiritual consolation and instruction.

At the time when Daniel was living the ascetic life in the solitude of Karyes, a war broke out in his native Serbia: against kral Milutin rose his brother Dragutin, who, with the help of the King of Hungary, wished to wrest the Serbian throne from Uroš Milutin for his son Urošica. Milutin was in great danger. Fearing an invasion by his enemies, he gathered his treasures in the monastery of Banja, but had no trustworthy person to whom he could entrust their keeping. At that time, owing to the death of the bishop, the see of Banja was without a pastor. And so kral Milutin recalled the energetic Daniel, former hegumen of Hilandar, and sent envoy after envoy to Karyes, summoning him. Devoted to solitary labors, Daniel long refused, but the kral's insistent entreaties compelled him to consent, and he came to kral Milutin. The kral explained his grave circumstances and, handing over the treasures gathered in the monastery of Banja, asked Daniel to take them under his protection and proposed that he occupy the episcopal see of Banja. Daniel very much did not wish to part from the solitary life on the holy mountain, but kral Milutin at last persuaded him to agree to the aforementioned proposal, promising to release him again to the holy mountain once the war ended happily.

When kral Milutin came successfully through the difficulties arising from the rebellion of his brother Dragutin, Daniel began again to ask to go to the holy mountain, and however much the kral urged him to remain in Serbia, he nonetheless withdrew once more to his beloved Hilandar, where, settling in the tower, or pyrgos, mentioned earlier, he again devoted himself to the labors of solitude. As always, and espe-

cially now, he occupied himself with reading and study of the books of Divine Scripture.

St. Daniel had long been drawn by the desire to visit the holy city of Jerusalem and venerate the Christian holy places. And now he judged that the favorable time had at last come for the fulfilment of his intention. He began to prepare for the journey to Jerusalem.

Learning of this, the Serbian kral Milutin was greatly grieved: he did not wish Daniel to leave him altogether, for he needed him as a man on whom he could rely, who could give both useful counsel and services of another kind. The kral began to persuade Daniel to put off his intention and, instead of the journey to Jerusalem, to return to Serbia, where various affairs and honors awaited him. Daniel yielded to the kral's entreaties. The Bishopric of Banja was abolished and made a hegumenate, and Daniel was left to dwell with the Serbian archbishop Sava III, who gave him a cell in his own house as his future successor; for Milutin, in urging Daniel to return to Serbia, had promised him in the future the Serbian archiepiscopal throne of St. Sava.

Sava III died soon after. For his place, however, someone other than Daniel was chosen, for unknown reasons: Daniel's disciple, Nikodim, the hegumen of Hilandar. Daniel, meanwhile, received the Eparchy of Holm.[34]

On 20 October 1320 the pious Serbian kral Stefan Uroš II Milutin died; he had ruled Serbia for thirty years, extended its borders and brought it great renown. Daniel was informed of the kral's illness and was present at his death and burial, which took place in Milutin's foundation, the monastery of St. Stephen at Banja, where Daniel had earlier been bishop.

On the Serbian throne succeeded Milutin's son, St. Stefan Uroš III of Dečani.[35]

Immediately after his coronation, he summoned and drew near to himself Bishop Daniel, whom from his youth he had been accustomed to love and value as a wise counselor for many years under his father, and especially as his helper and defender in grave misfortunes.

34. The Diocese of Holm, or Zaholm, was located in what is now Herzegovina.
35. 6 January 1321; see the Life of St. Stephen of Dečani under 11 November.

To the intercession and entreaty of Daniel, Stefan of Dečani owed his release from imprisonment in Constantinople and his final reconciliation with his father.

Daniel thus now became the constant teacher, counselor and helper of the Serbian kral. At the beginning of Stefan of Dečani's reign difficulties arose, both within the country and from without. The new kral had to defend himself against internal enemies, his rivals who had raised rebellion, namely his cousin Vladislav, son of kral Dragutin, and his half-brother Konstantin. It was also necessary to guard himself and Serbia against external enemies. The Bulgarian tsar Michael had put away his wife Neda, sister of Stefan of Dečani, and sought rapprochement and alliance with the Greeks against the Serbs. Stefan of Dečani had to defend himself by arms and also to resort to peaceful agreements and negotiations. For such negotiations there was then no man more capable than Bishop Daniel, who possessed varied worldly experience and extraordinary eloquence, especially the skill of speaking before kings. And so, at the request and commission of kral Stefan of Dečani, Daniel carried out with full success an embassy to the Bulgarian tsar Michael and to the Constantinopolitan emperor Andronicus the Younger.

In performing the various commissions of his sovereign, Daniel could not forget his beloved Holy Mountain of Athos, and whenever possible he still went there, but he was no longer permitted to stay there long. Thus, after the aforementioned embassies were completed, he withdrew again to Athos, but the death of the Serbian archbishop Nikodim, which followed on 13 May 1323, obliged him to return to Serbia. A council of clergy and rulers convened by the kral unanimously, on 14 September of that year, proclaimed Daniel "archbishop of all the Serbian and Maritime lands." He was then 50 years old.

Having occupied the archiepiscopal throne, Daniel with all the powers of his soul gave himself to care for the welfare of the Church of his so dearly beloved homeland. First of all, of course, he turned his attention to the ecclesiastical good order, both internal and external. As an enlightened man, he sought among the clergy to raise enlightenment by encouraging learning and the spread of schools and books.

In the divine services and the life of church people he took care to introduce a strict order, arrangement and decorum. He devoted much effort to ensuring that the churches had the necessary books; many books, of kinds that the Serbians did not previously have, were introduced into church use.

Archbishop Daniel, over the course of his long life, acquired great experience in matters of building and administration. Having taken the highest place in the government of the Serbian Church, he applied his wide knowledge and experience to the task. With the sympathy of the Serbian kral, and with his own fervent zeal, he had full opportunity to attend to the outward good order of the Serbian churches: he erected new splendid churches, restored and rebuilt old ones, adorned them outside and within, and supplied them with church vessels, sacred vestments and books, and decorated them with icons and wall painting. For the building and adornment of the churches he procured the necessary, often costly materials, both in Serbia itself and beyond its borders, commissioning both craftsmen and the objects themselves; for example, bells for the churches from the Adriatic coast.

He expended especially much labor and care upon the building and adornment of the churches in the two archiepiscopal cathedral monasteries, at Žiča and at Peć. In one place, in thanksgiving for his deliverance from the dangers to which he had been exposed in his manifold wanderings through Serbia and beyond its borders, he built a splendid church in honor of the Mother of God, called the Hodegetria of Constantinople, with two side-chapels, in honor of St. John the Forerunner and of St. Arsenius, Archbishop of Serbia, and there also a small church in the name of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker. Having adorned it magnificently within and without and furnished it with everything necessary, he established that in this church services should be celebrated by Greek monks according to Greek books and by the rite of the Greek monasteries. In another place, to the previously existing churches of the holy apostles and of St. Demetrius, and to the Theotokos church he had built, he added a common refectory (trapeza), after the pattern of Greek churches, of precious materials and with various

decorations within and without, and near it a pyrgos, or fortified tower, with a church upon the top in the name of St. Daniel the Stylite.

In various places of Serbia, namely in the fortress of Maglič, in the towns of Jelica, Lizica and others, Archbishop Daniel either newly built or restored many churches, monasteries and other buildings belonging to the Church.

Besides the erection of churches and other buildings, Daniel everywhere, at monasteries and churches, took care to arrange and cultivate kitchen gardens, orchards, vineyards, and husbandry in general, so as to provide for the various ecclesiastical establishments.

The time of Archbishop Daniel's governance was the best time of both the inner and the outer flourishing of the Serbian Church; many monuments of antiquity from that time have survived to this day.

Under Stephen of Dečani, Daniel was his constant and chief counsellor. When war flared up between Serbia and Bulgaria, and Stephen of Dečani, together with his son Stephen Dušan, set out on campaign, Daniel was left as guardian of the royal family and chief ruler of the land. The kralj sent word from the field of battle to Archbishop Daniel, and the archbishop appointed prayer services for the granting of victory; and when at the battle of Velbužd the Serbs gained a decisive victory over the Bulgarians, Daniel appointed services of thanksgiving throughout all the Serbian land. King Stephen of Dečani, in token of gratitude to the Lord God for the victory granted, resolved to use the treasures that fell to him as military spoil after the defeat of the Bulgarians to build for himself a memorial church, the magnificent church of the Ascension of the Lord at Dečani. In the choice of the site and in the building of this precious artistic church, Archbishop Daniel took the most active part; he was not only its founder and the builder of the monastery, but also a donor: at his own expense he built one portion of the church as his own memorial foundation[36].

Not long after the celebrations of victory over the enemies, Archbishop Daniel had to live through the grievous circumstances of the internal Serbian strife, in which the pious King Stephen of Dečani was

36. For more detail on all these matters, see the aforementioned Life of St. Stephen of Dečani under 11 November in these Chet'i-Minei.

destined to perish a martyr's death at the hands of murderers who acted not without the knowledge of his son Stephen Dušan[37].

Stephen Dušan, having become sole ruler of Serbia, by force of arms extended the borders of the state and won new glory for Serbia and the Serbian Church. After conquering certain Greek regions he took the title of Tsar of the Serbs and the Greeks, and he raised the Serbian archbishop to the rank of Serbian patriarch. This was in 1346, but Archbishop Daniel did not live to see these events: he peacefully reposed on 20 December 1337.

The holy Archbishop Daniel is renowned not only as a pious ascetic and a churchman and statesman, but also as an enlightened man of books and a writer. His disciple, who wrote his Life, bears witness to Daniel's extraordinary erudition, his love of reading and of enlightening others, and his concern for the spread of books in Serbia, not only in new copies of earlier books but also in the composition and translation of new books. In both of these undertakings Daniel himself labored tirelessly all his life. As a writer he left behind a vast and precious work, *The Lives of the Kings and Archbishops of Serbia*. Daniel loved his homeland ardently and took care that the exploits and deeds of the earlier kings and archbishops, many of whom have been numbered among the saints, should not fall into oblivion[38]. By his example and his cares Daniel greatly contributed to the development of Serbian letters in his time, especially at the Hilandar monastery, which he loved and which for a long time served as the center of Serbian spiritual enlightenment.

* * *

NOTES

8597. There were two routes from Smyrna to Rome: one by sea, through the Archipelago and the Mediterranean, and another overland, through Macedonia. Ignatius was taken by the latter route, while the Christians of Ephesus could set out by ship and

37. See the same Life.

38. This work of Daniel, sometimes called now the Genealogy and now the Tsarostavnik, was published with later additions, among which belongs also the Life of Daniel, written by one of his disciples, and was published by Daničić in the edition cited in the note on p. 1016.

deliver Ignatius's letters to Rome before his arrival. But overland, too, they would naturally have arrived in Rome before Ignatius, who, weighed down by age, was delayed in Smyrna. From Smyrna St. Ignatius sent three epistles: to the Ephesians, to the Magnesians (the city of Magnesia near the Maeander in Ionia), and to the Trallians (in Asia), who had sent to Smyrna their bishops with presbyters and deacons to greet the holy prisoner. In these epistles St. Ignatius thanks the churches for the love shown him, exhorts their flocks to keep unity of spirit and to obey the bishops and presbyters, and warns against false teachers: Judaizing Christians, who regarded Christianity merely as an addition to Judaism, and Docetists, who rejected the truth of the Savior's birth, suffering and resurrection and in general acknowledged nothing human in Him.

8600. In the Lives of the Saints of St. Dimitri of Rostov (the Chet'i-Minei), the Life of St. Ignatius contains the following account. "Some also relate this concerning St. Ignatius the God-bearer. When he was being led to be devoured by the beasts, and he unceasingly had on his lips the name of Jesus Christ, the impious asked him why he repeated that name without ceasing. The Saint answered that he had the name of Jesus Christ inscribed in his heart, and confessed with his lips Him whom he always bore in his heart. When the Saint had been devoured by the beasts, his heart was preserved by the will of God among his remaining bones, untouched by the beasts. The unbelievers, finding it, recalled the words of St. Ignatius and cut his heart in two, desiring to be assured whether what he had said was true. And on both inner surfaces of the cut heart they found an inscription in golden letters: 'Jesus Christ.' Thus St. Ignatius was a God-bearer by name and in truth, always bearing Christ God in his heart, inscribed, as it were with a reed, by a God-minded mind."

THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF DECEMBER

December 21

21 декабря

New Calendar December 21 · Old Calendar January 3 (civil dates)

Passion of the Holy Martyr Juliana the Virgin, and of Those with Her

Страдание святой мученицы Иулиании девы и других с нею

In the reign of the impious Roman emperors, Diocletian in the East and Maximian in the West, idol worship held sway in the Byzantine city of Nicomedia.[1] At that time there lived there a wealthy and noble man named Africanus, who was deeply devoted to pagan impiety. He had a daughter named Juliana. When Juliana began to come of age and to blossom in beauty, and at the same time to show intelligence and good morals, one of the imperial officials, named Eleusius, anticipating other suitors, betrothed himself to her in advance, the wedding itself being postponed until she came of age. Meanwhile Juliana, having heard the Gospel preaching about Christ, believed in Him and became a secret Christian. Beholding heaven, earth, sea and fire, she sought the One who had created all this, and from creation she learned to know the Creator, as the holy Apostle Paul says: His invisible things, His eternal power and Divinity, are seen from the creation of the world through the contemplation of His works (Rom. 1:20). And she reflected in her soul: "There is one true God, who alone is to be worshipped! The lifeless idols are not gods, but dwellings of demons." From then on she devoted herself diligently to prayer and to the reading of the Divine books, meditating on the Law of the Lord day and night, secretly from her father, who, as a zealous pagan, was a friend of the demons and an enemy of Christians. Juliana's mother, though also a pagan, did not reject the Christian faith either. Yet she cared particularly for neither

1. On Nicomedia see p. 954, note 7.

faith: she served the idols with no great zeal, nor did she honor Christ, and therefore she paid no attention to which faith her daughter held. Thus, through the negligence of her mother, the blessed Juliana could easily conceal from her father her faith in Christ and occupy herself with prayer and the reading of the Divine Scriptures. Filled in her heart with love for God and steadfast in piety, she considered how she might refuse the man to whom she had been betrothed and avoid marriage with an impious man, keep her virginity inviolate from an idolater, and preserve her body pure from a servant of demons.

Therefore, when the time of the marriage drew near, Juliana sent word to her betrothed Eleusius:

"Do not prepare for the marriage in vain. Let it be known to you that I will not consent to go to you as your wife unless you become the eparch of this land."

The saint did this in the belief that Eleusius could never attain that rank, and so she thought to escape marriage with him. But Eleusius, captivated by love for her, began earnestly to seek the office of eparch, now by urgent entreaties, now by rich gifts, now through powerful intercessors, begging the emperor to honor him with that dignity. And after a long time, having spent much of his wealth, he attained what he desired, though with difficulty and with the help of a demon, for the devil, wishing to hinder the good intention of the holy virgin, aided Eleusius. Having become eparch, he at once sent word to his bride:

"Rejoice, Juliana, that you have as your betrothed one who has been honored with glory, for I am eparch! Therefore prepare for the marriage."

Juliana, seeing that by a contrived pretext she had not escaped the snares of Eleusius, openly declared what she had long kept hidden in her heart, and answered him through the messengers:

"It is well that you have been granted the eparchy; but if you do not bow down to my God and serve the Lord Jesus Christ, whom I serve, then seek another bride for yourself, for you are not pleasing to me, since I do not desire to have as husband one who does not confess the one faith with me."

Hearing this, Eleusius was astonished at the change in his bride and was greatly angered. Summoning her father Africanus, he began to question him:

"Why does your daughter both reject our gods and scorn me?"

At this Eleusius reported to Africanus all her words, as they had been delivered through the messengers.

Hearing of this, Africanus was perplexed, astonished at so unexpected a circumstance, and no less than the eparch he was greatly angered at Juliana, since he himself was a zealous worshipper of his vile gods. Returning home, he at first began to question his daughter gently and paternally:

"Tell me, beloved daughter and sweet light of my eyes, why do you shrink from marriage and refuse your hand to the eparch?"

Juliana, unwilling even to hear of it, answered:

"Stop, Father! For I swear by my hope, my Lord Jesus Christ, that Eleusius will not enter into marriage with me unless he first accepts my faith. For what marriage is it, to be joined in body while divided in spirit and to be at enmity with one another?"

Then Juliana's father, beside himself with anger, cried out:

"Are you out of your mind, wretched girl, or do you love torments?"

"For Christ I love torments," answered the holy virgin.

"I swear by the great gods, Apollo and Artemis,"[2] cried Africanus, "I will give your body to the beasts and dogs to devour."

The saint answered:

"Then why do you delay? Let the dogs come, let the beasts come, and let there be for me, if it is possible, many deaths in place of one, for I shall rejoice to die many times for Christ and to receive from Him a reward each time."

Then her father, wishing to bring her round to his desire by cunning, set aside his anger and began to speak to her tenderly, begging

2. Apollo was one of the pagan gods most revered by the ancient Greeks and Romans, considered the god of the sun and of intellectual enlightenment, as well as of public order, the guardian of law, and the deity of prophecy of the future. Artemis, otherwise Diana, was a well-known pagan goddess among the Greeks, who personified the moon and was regarded as the patroness of forests and of the hunt. Worship of this goddess was performed with great splendor and brilliance.

and urging her not to disobey him. But she, filled with good hope, answered him and fearlessly said:

"Are you too like your deaf gods, for you have ears and do not hear? Did I not tell you with an oath that I cannot have fellowship with Eleusius unless he first consents to worship my Christ?"

Hearing this, the father shut her up in a room. Then he brought her out again and, with kind and gentle words and with tears, began to persuade the saint to honor the gods and to love Eleusius. But the courageous virgin again cried out:

"I will not offer sacrifice to the gods, I will not bow down to idols, I will not love the impious Eleusius! I worship the One Christ alone, I honor Christ, I love Christ!"

Then the father, enraged, seized Juliana and began to beat her without mercy: throwing her to the ground, he dragged her by the hair and trampled her underfoot. He acted not as a parent but as a torturer, showing no paternal pity at all, and in his savage fury and unrestrained anger forgetting the natural love for his daughter. He beat her until he himself was tired, so that the blessed virgin was barely left alive. After this he sent her back to her betrothed, the eparch Eleusius, that he might do with her as he wished. He, scorned by her, was filled with great rage against her: breathing wrath and gnashing his teeth at her, he counted it a great dishonor to himself that she had loathed him and rejected his love. Therefore he rejoiced greatly that she had been delivered into his hands and that he had gained power over her. And he resolved to try her publicly (for he was eparch), ostensibly for not honoring the gods, but in reality taking vengeance for her contempt of him. Seated on the judgment seat, he ordered the Lamb of Christ to be brought for interrogation.

When the holy virgin Juliana stood for judgment before her betrothed Eleusius, and shone forth in the beauty of her face like the dawn, all turned their gaze upon her, marveling at the beauty of her countenance. Eleusius, no sooner had he looked at her, than he was at once softened, and his anger turned to love. At first he could say no cruel word to her, but began to speak peaceably and tenderly, seized with the desire to possess the maiden. He said to her:

"Believe me, most beautiful maiden, that if you choose me as your husband, you will be freed from all the grievous torments that await you, even if you do not consent to offer sacrifice to the gods. I will not compel you to this; only consent to marry me."

To this the Bride of Christ answered:

"No word, no torment, not even death itself will compel me to be united with you in marriage before you become a Christian and receive holy baptism."

"This I would do, beloved," answered Eleusius, "were I not afraid of the emperor's anger: for when the emperor learns of it, he will deprive me not only of this high office but with it of life itself."

The saint said:

"If you so fear your emperor, who is mortal, temporal, having power only over the body and not over the soul, how can I fail to fear the Immortal King, who has power over all kings and reigns over every breath and over the soul, and how can I be joined in the marital bond with His enemy? If one of your slaves entered into friendship with your enemy, would it be pleasing to you, and would you not be angry with your slave for this? Therefore do not deceive yourself or speak empty words, hoping to persuade me. If you wish, turn also to my God; if you do not do this, then kill me, cast me into the fire, cover me with wounds, give me to the beasts, and subject me to whatever torments you like, but I will not obey you, for you are repugnant to me; wedlock with you is for me the same as friendship with demons, and marriage with you is like a stinking tomb placed before my eyes."

Hearing this, Eleusius was kindled with anger, and his face changed, for such is impure love when it is scorned and rejected. He ordered Juliana to be stripped and stretched out in the form of a cross, bound by cords at her hands and feet, and then cruelly beaten with dried sinews and rods. And the saint was scourged by six soldiers for a long time, until the tormentors themselves grew weary. She, though by nature a frail vessel, bore the torments with courage.

Having ordered the soldiers to stop the scourging, the eparch said to Juliana:

"This is only the beginning of your torments, Juliana; far greater ones await you if you do not offer sacrifice to the great Artemis."

But the martyr, preferring to endure torments rather than listen to Eleusius, who still hoped to bring her to do his will, answered:

"O truly you are mad and senseless! Why do you still not torment me? What are you still waiting for? I am more ready to endure torments than you are ready to inflict them on me."

Then the saint was hung by her hair and remained suspended for a considerable part of the day, so that the skin of her head was torn away from the flesh, her face swelled, and her eyebrows were drawn upward. Eleusius, still holding some hope out of love for her, tenderly urged her to spare herself. When his tender words and entreaties had no success, he grew even more angry and commanded that her sides be scorched with red-hot iron and other parts of her body be burned; then, binding her hands and piercing her thigh with a sharp iron, he threw her, barely alive, into prison.

In the prison St. Juliana lay prostrate on the ground and cried out to God:

"O Lord my God, almighty, invincible in strength and steadfast in deeds! Take from me these sorrows and deliver me from the sufferings that have come upon me, as Thou didst deliver Daniel from the lions and Thecla from the fire and the beasts! My father and my mother have forsaken me; but Thou, O Lord, do not depart from me. As Thou didst once preserve the Israelites who passed through the sea and didst drown their enemies, so now preserve me. Crush Eleusius, who has risen up against me, and with him Satan, who seeks to hinder me from salvation, O invincible King!"

While Juliana was thus praying to God, and the prayer was still on her lips, the invisible enemy, the devil, transformed into the likeness of a bright Angel, appeared visibly to her and said:

"Behold, Juliana, you endure grievous torments, but Eleusius has prepared for you still more grievous and truly unbearable ones. When you are brought out of the prison, immediately offer sacrifice to the gods, for you will not be able to endure the great fury of the torments any longer."

The saint asked:

"Who are you?"

The devil answered:

"I am an Angel, and since God takes great care for you, He has sent me to you, for He desired that you should obey the eparch, so that your body might not perish from many torments. The Lord is merciful and will forgive you this for the weakness of your tormented flesh."

Hearing this, the martyr was astonished and troubled, for she saw that the one who had appeared was an Angel in appearance but an enemy in his words. Therefore, sighing from the depths of her heart and with tears in her eyes, she said:

"My Lord, Creator of the universe, whom alone the Heavenly Powers praise and before whom the multitude of demons trembles! Do not despise me, suffering for Thee, lest my enemy ever mix sweetness with bitterness and offer it to me. Tell me, who is he who spoke such words to me? Who is he who calls himself Thy servant?"

Thus the saint cried out, and was immediately heard, for a voice came from heaven:

"Be bold, Juliana! I am with you! Do with him whatever you wish, for I give you power and strength over him; and from himself learn who he is and why he has come to you."

Following this there occurred the following miracle: immediately her bonds were loosed and the iron fell from her thighs; then the saint rose from the ground, sound and strong in body, while the devil, restrained by the power of God, stood and could not flee, being bound by invisible chains. The holy martyr seized him as an unprofitable slave and, as though interrogating him at a trial, began to ask who he was, whence he came, and by whom he had been sent. The devil, though full of lies, being compelled by the tormenting power of the Creator, began, though against his will, to speak the truth.

"I," he said, "am the devil, one of the first princes of darkness, sent by my father Satan to tempt and seduce you, for we have received great torment from your prayers and from your virginal purity and steadfast endurance. I am he who once counseled Eve in Paradise to transgress the commandment of God to her ruin. I suggested to Cain that he kill

his brother Abel. I taught Nebuchadnezzar to set up a golden idol in the plain of Dura. I enticed the Jews to worship idols. I drove the wise Solomon mad, stirring up in him passion for women. I prompted Herod to the slaughter of the infants, and Judas to betray the Teacher and to hang himself. I moved the Jews to stone Stephen, I incited Nero to crucify Peter head downward and to behead Paul with the sword."

Hearing this, the holy Juliana worked a new miracle, for she laid upon him other bonds and wounds (besides the invisible ones by which the devil was bound by God), and having bound him, she began to beat him. And what is marvelous: the holy one was able to bind with material bonds and to beat a bodiless and immaterial spirit! For the power of God, which held him with bonds that gave him no possibility of escape and punished him with an invisible yet real pain, delivered him into the power of His beloved bride. And the demon endured pain from the hands of the maiden as from the hands of God, for together with the material scourging the demon received also an immaterial wound, that from which truly the slave of demons receives torment.

"Woe is me!" he cried out. "What am I to do now, and how shall I escape? I have seduced many and brought them to calamity, and now I myself am seduced and have fallen into calamity. I have inflicted wounds on many, and now I am bound by virginal hands and wounded by them. I have enslaved many to myself, and now I myself am held as a captive and a slave. O my father Satan! Why did you send me here? Did you not know that nothing is stronger than virginity and nothing firmer than the prayers of martyrs?"

Thus St. Juliana tormented the demon through the whole night; and in the morning the eparch commanded that, if she was alive, she be brought out of the prison. The saint, walking, dragged the devil along with her and cast him into a heap of mire lying on the road. Then she presented herself before Eleusius, shining with her former beauty and comeliness of face, and sound in her whole body, as though she had never endured any torment. The tormentor, astonished, said to her:

"Tell me, Juliana, when and how did you learn such sorcery? And by what art did you heal so quickly from your wounds that not even a trace of them can be found on you?"

The saint answered:

"I am acquainted with no art of sorcery, but I was healed by the ineffable and almighty power of God, which has shamed not only you but your father Satan, and has made me far stronger than you both. You and your master, the devil, are beneath my feet, for I have bound your lord, whom you serve, and have made your torments as though they had never been. Thus my Christ has here destroyed your power, and there He has prepared for you, your father, and your servants the eternal fire and the dreadful Tartarus, outer darkness and the place filled with unsleeping worms, which you will soon receive."

Then the tormentor, hearing from the lips of the saint of the eternal fire, immediately commanded that a great temporal fire be prepared; the furnace was heated strongly and the saint was cast into it. But she, standing unharmed in the flame, prayed there to the Lord and shed tears from her eyes, and suddenly these small tears became as two great springs and quenched the whole fire.

The whole people of Nicomedia was greatly astonished at this miracle, and about five hundred men and one hundred and thirty women believed in Christ. All of them, as with one voice, cried out:

"There is one God, the One whom the martyr Juliana glorifies; we believe in Him and renounce pagan idolatry. We are Christians! Let the sword come upon us, let the fire come, let some most cruel death come: we are ready to die with Juliana for the One True God!"

When they thus cried out openly, the eparch at once commanded that armed soldiers be brought, and having separated all who had believed from the people gathered for the spectacle, they were beheaded with the sword, and this was done. And they all gladly bowed their heads beneath the sword and died for Christ, receiving baptism in their own blood. After this the tormentor, breathing unrestrained fury, commanded that the saint be stripped and cast into a vigorously boiling cauldron and boiled there a long time, as though some food. But this cauldron was for the saint like a warm bath after labors, for it did no harm to her body but only washed her, as in a font, for an Angel of the Lord came down to her and preserved her unharmed. The fire from the furnace, however, rushed upon those standing nearby and did what it

once did to the furnace of Babylon: it burned all whom it reached. After this the cauldron burst, and the martyr came out of it unharmed. The people surrounded her with astonishment, like a high tower, for indeed the saint became taller than all.

Seeing all this, the tormentor was at a loss as to what else to undertake, since all his torments had failed to achieve their goal. Considering himself mocked and shamed by a maiden, he began to tear his hair, scratch his face, rend his garments, and, in violent anger, to utter many blasphemous and abusive words against his gods, saying that in serving them he could not overcome a single maiden. Then he condemned the holy martyr Juliana to be beheaded with the sword.

But the devil, who had been bound by the saint in the prison, appeared again, and standing at a distance (for he still feared the holy martyr and remembered the blows she had inflicted), visibly, in the form of a man, rejoiced at her condemnation to death and hastened the soldiers to take her quickly and deliver her to death. When the holy maiden looked at him with a stern eye, he at once trembled and cried out:

"Oh, woe is me! This merciless maiden again wants to seize me with her hands!"

And having cried this aloud for all to hear, the devil vanished.

The soldiers took the martyr and led her to execution, and the saint went with joy and gladness, as if to a wedding, hastening to the bridal chamber. Having offered prayer, she bowed her holy head beneath the sword and was beheaded. Thus she was united to her beloved Bridegroom, Christ the Lord, for Whom she had suffered with joy[3].

A certain Roman woman named Sophia, who was at that time in Nicomedia on some business of her own and was returning to Rome, took with her the body of the martyr of Christ, Juliana. Bringing it to her house, she afterwards built a fair church, worthy of such a martyr, in the name of Juliana, and with honor laid her holy relics in it.

As for Eleusius, the judgment of God soon overtook him: as he was sailing on the sea, a storm arose, the ship was broken, and all who were

3. St. Juliana, a virgin, and with her 500 men and 130 suffered in 304.

in it were drowned. Eleusius himself, to his own great distress and torment, was saved from drowning and came ashore on a certain island, where he was torn to pieces by dogs.

Thus the impious man perished in disgrace, receiving the worthy recompense for his deeds, for the murder of the innocent and holy virgin Juliana.

Such were the martyric struggle of the Bride of Christ, Juliana, and her passion-bearing end.

She was betrothed to Eleusius in the ninth year of her life, and in the eighteenth year she was united by her blood to the Immortal Bridegroom, having laid down her soul for Him, and now she rejoices in the heavenly bridal chamber with Christ the Lord, glorified by every creature unto endless ages. Amen.

Kontakion, Tone 3:

O maiden Juliana, most purified by the virtues of virginity, having now been crowned with the crowns of martyrdom, thou bestowest healing on those who are in need and sickness, and salvation on those who approach thy reliquary; for Christ pours forth divine grace and eternal life.

* * *

Life of St. Peter, Metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia

Житие святого Петра, митрополита Киевского и всея России

St. Peter, Metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia, was born in the land of Volhynia[4], of pious Christian parents[5]. When he was still in his mother's womb, at dawn on a Sunday, his mother saw such a vision: it seemed to her that she was holding a lamb in her arms, and from among its horns there grew a densely leafed tree, bearing many fruits and flowers, and among its branches were many candles, shining and giving forth fragrance.

4. Volhynia is the southwestern part of Russia.

5. The parents of St. Peter were people of sufficient means and belonged to the boyar or merchant class, which is why St. Peter was later able to build a monastery at his own expense.

Awakening, the mother wondered at the marvelous vision, but afterwards the Lord confirmed the vision, enriching her son with His gifts.

At the age of seven St. Peter was given to be taught Holy Scripture, but at first he learned poorly, which caused his parents no little sorrow. This was so that he might receive the wisdom of letters more from God than from men. And indeed St. Peter received it in this way.

Once he saw in a dream that a certain man in hierarchical vestments came to him and said:

– Child, open your mouth!

When Peter did so, the one who appeared touched his tongue with his right hand, and, blessing him, filled his mouth with sweetness.

Awakening, the youth saw no one, but only felt in his heart a certain sweetness and joy.

From that time St. Peter began quickly to understand what his teacher taught him; in a short time he had studied all of Holy Scripture and surpassed all his peers in learning.

When Peter was twelve years old, he went to a monastery near his birthplace and was accepted among the brethren; there he performed the monastery obediences, carried water and firewood to the kitchen, washed the brethren's hair shirts, and in neither winter nor summer did he in any way neglect his rule. He was the first to come to the church services and the last to leave; he stood in church with reverence, attentively listening to Holy Scripture, never leaning against a wall. He always showed obedience to his teacher and willingly served the brethren in humility and silence. By the will of the abbot he was made a deacon, and afterwards a priest. He learned also to paint holy icons[6], and when he painted he withdrew with all his mind and thought from earthly things, and, filled with contemplation of God, he zealously strove for a virtuous life.

After a fairly long stay in that monastery, by the blessing of the abbot St. Peter withdrew to a desert place and founded a monastery for

6. According to the ancient Life, St. Peter learned the art of icon painting to such a degree that he became "a wondrous iconographer." Monuments of this to the present day are the two icons of the Mother of God painted by him, found in the great Dormition Cathedral in Moscow: the Dormition of the Mother of God, and another, known especially by his name as the Petrovskaya.

himself on the river Rata[7]. There he built a church in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, and in a short time many brethren gathered to him there.

The saint was kind and free from malice, and considered himself the last of all; he taught everyone with meekness, zealously gave alms, never sending away a poor man or a wayfarer who asked for help, so that the report of his virtuous life reached the prince. Therefore he was honored by all, and all received from him a word of instruction.

At that time Metropolitan Maximus[8] arrived in Rus from Constantinople, teaching the people the doctrine handed down by God. Coming to him with his brethren to receive a blessing, St. Peter presented to him an icon of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos, which he had painted himself. The hierarch of God blessed him and the brethren, and, receiving the holy icon, kept it with him in great honor.

Some time later, when Hierarch Maximus reposed, a certain Gerontius[9] dared to seize the hierarchal office, taking the hierarchal vestments, the sacristy, and the pastoral staff, as well as the icon which Peter had painted and presented to Hierarch Maximus, and set out for Constantinople, desiring to become Metropolitan of Rus.

Then the prince of the land of Volhynia[10] began to urge the blessed Peter, now asking him himself, now through the boyars, to go to Constantinople to be consecrated to the hierarchal throne of the Kievan metropolis, for no one favored Gerontius, because of the presumption with which, without counsel or election, he had hastened to seize the hierarchal rank: “not entering by the door, but climbing up some other way” (Jn. 10:1).

7. This place was situated north of Lvov, the capital of the Galician-Volhynian principality; the river Rata flows through present-day Austrian eastern Galicia and empties on the left side into the upper western Bug. The Monastery of St. Peter, built in the name of the Savior (Transfiguration), no longer exists; in its place there now stands a village with a parish church, also in the name of the Savior.

8. St. Maximus, Greek by origin, governed the Russian Church from 1283 to 1304.

9. One of the hegumens of Vladimir.

10. Here is meant the Galician-Volhynian prince Yuri Lvovich, who was indignant at Gerontius's arbitrariness all the more because, in Volhynia, the discontented wished to see the metropolitan somewhere in the south, since the removal of the see from Kiev to distant Vladimir had displeased them; Prince Yuri especially wished the metropolitanate to be at Galich. Prince Yuri was powerful; owning all of Galicia, he was even styled "Tsar of Rus."

The blessed Peter for a long time did not wish it and refused, but at last, being entreated by the prince, the boyars, and the council of hierarchs, he set out, and the prince sent a letter about him to the most holy patriarch and to his whole synod, expressing the desire to see Peter on the hierarchal throne.

When Gerontius set out by sea for Constantinople, the voyage proved unfavorable for him: a strong storm arose, with contrary winds and waves, so that on the way he was delayed a considerable time. But for the blessed Peter, on the same sea there was a calm and favorable wind, and he crossed the sea as if in a dream.

At this same time there appeared to Gerontius in a vision the aforementioned icon of the Most Holy Lady, which said to him:

– In vain, old man, do you labor, for the hierarchal rank which you seek shall not fall to you. But he who painted me, the abbot of Rata, Peter, the servant of My Son and God and Mine, shall be raised to the hierarchal throne and shall rightly shepherd His people, for whom My Son, Christ the Lord, shed His blood, received from Me; and having lived in a God-pleasing way, in a good old age he shall depart with joy to the Lord of all.

Gerontius awoke in fear and told everyone about the vision.

At last St. Peter reached Constantinople; the patriarch of Constantinople at that time was Athanasius, a wondrous man who adorned the ecumenical throne with his virtues[11]. When Peter came to the patriarch, the church was filled with fragrance; the patriarch, enlightened from above, understood that such fragrance was for the coming of Peter, and gladly blessed him. Then, learning the cause of his arrival, the patriarch convened a council of hierarchs, and they conducted the customary examination of the matter. Peter was found worthy of the hierarchal rank, having been foreordained to it before his birth.

So the patriarch, during the celebration of the Divine Service, consecrated this wondrous Peter to the hierarchal ministry[12]; and at the

11. Athanasius II, Patriarch of Constantinople from 1303 to 1311.
12. St. Peter was appointed Metropolitan of All Rus' in 1308, in the third year after the repose of Metropolitan Maximus.

consecration the face of the servant of God shone so brightly that all marveled and said:

– Truly this man has come to us by the command of God – and all were filled with spiritual joy.

A few days later, Gerontius also arrived in Constantinople and (though against his will) told everything that had happened to him. The patriarch, taking from him the hierarchal vestments, the venerable icon, the pastoral staff, and the church vessels, gave them all into the hands of the true shepherd, Peter.

Then the most holy patriarch, having instructed the holy and blessed Peter for many days and blessed him, sent him with honor from Constantinople.

St. Peter, arriving in his metropolis, gave peace and blessing to all and diligently taught the flock entrusted to him by God, moving from one place to another[13].

But the cunning enemy could not endure this and devised plots against St. Peter, prompting some not to acknowledge him as hierarch. However, many of these afterwards repented, accepted the hierarch, and, submitting to him, received forgiveness from him.

After some time, the crafty enemy stirred up envy against St. Peter in Andrew, Bishop of Tver,[14] who, not restraining his tongue, began to spread false reports about the righteous man. Having written many false and blasphemous words, he sent them to the Most Holy Patriarch Athanasius. The patriarch was astonished and considered the accusations incredible; nevertheless, he sent one of the churchmen into the Russian land, and then a council was convened in the city of Pereyaslavl.[15] At that council were present Simeon, Bishop of Rostov,

13. In the year after his consecration, St. Metropolitan Peter moved to Vladimir, where the see of the Metropolitan of All Rus' had been established by his predecessor. Thereafter he set out to visit the eparchies: thus he was in Novgorod, in Bryansk, and in other cities and regions.

14. Andrew, Bishop of Tver, came from the house of the Lithuanian princes. He harbored designs upon the metropolitan see. The nobility of his lineage, and the discontent of some with the metropolitan chosen from the south, sustained in him the dream of the higher rank. Later, after his removal from the see, he died in 1323 in the Monastery of the Mother of God, which he had earlier built on the river Shosha (a right tributary of the Volga).

15. The council was convened in 1310 or at the beginning of 1311. – Pereyaslavl-Zalessky, now a district town of Vladimir Province.

the Venerable Prokhor, Hegumen of the Caves, princes, boyars, priests, monks, and a great multitude of others. When Andrew, Bishop of Tver, was summoned to the council, the matter was investigated, and when false witnesses came forward against Peter, a great commotion arose. The author of the evil was not concealed, but was revealed before all. The malice and slander of Andrew were exposed, and the lying slanderer was shamed and humbled before everyone. St. Peter, however, did him no harm, but forgave him, and having sufficiently instructed all, dismissed the council in peace. He himself added labors to labors, multiplying the talent given him a hundredfold, and became a father to orphans.

At that time there appeared a certain heretic, Seit,[16] who preached a doctrine contrary to the Church of Christ and the Orthodox faith. The Hierarch of God subjected him to excommunication, and the malicious heretic soon perished by an evil death.

After this, the Servant of God Peter arrived in the glorious city of Moscow, which at that time was under the rule of the right-believing Grand Prince John Danilovich,[17] adorned with every virtue, merciful to the poor and to the clergy, who loved churches and was diligent in the holy books. The Hierarch greatly loved him and began to live in that city more than in other places.[18] He advised the right-believing prince

16. According to the chronicles, teachers of Mohammedanism, which Khan Uzbek was then so zealously spreading among the Tatars, were constantly called *Seits*. But the title of heretic and the excommunication pronounced by St. Peter upon the said Seit show that he was a Christian who greatly distorted the Christian teaching; the name Seit was given to him because of his infatuation with certain views of Mohammedanism. According to some reports, Seit was a Novgorod protopriest who had been carried away by the Mohammedan passion for sensual life and who preached against monastic virginity with such force that many monks left the monastic life and entered into marriage. The denunciation of Seit took place during the bishop's visitation of the eparchies.

17. This refers to the Grand Prince of Moscow, John I Danilovich Kalita, grandson of St. Alexander Nevsky and of St. Daniel, founder of the Moscow principality. He reigned from 1328 to 1340. He was called Kalita because, being distinguished by his love for the poor, he always carried with him a *kalita* (a purse) of money for distributing to them.

18. St. Peter, enlightened by grace, foresaw the great future of Moscow, although at that time it was a sparsely populated city. He saw that Moscow would gather under its shelter the divided and torn regions of Russia, and he resolved to remain forever in Moscow and to be buried there instead of in Vladimir. Thus the metropolitan see was transferred from Vladimir to Moscow, which served to exalt Moscow, to lay a lasting foundation for peace (amid the internecine strife of the appanage princes of that time), and to the greatness of Russia.

to build a stone church in Moscow in the name of the Dormition of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, persuading him thus:

"If you listen to me, my son, and build a church to the Most Holy Theotokos, you yourself will be glorified more than the other princes, and your city will be glorified: hierarchs will dwell in it, its hands will be lifted up against its enemies, God will be glorified in it, and my bones shall be laid here."

Heeding the Hierarch's counsel, the prince began to concern himself with the building of the church.[19] When the church was laid down, work on its construction proceeded daily, and the Hierarch himself oversaw that the work moved forward without interruption.

Shortly before the blessed repose of St. Peter, Prince John Danilovich saw the following dream. There appeared to him a high mountain whose summit was covered with snow, and suddenly the snow melted and vanished. When the prince related the dream that had struck him to the Hierarch, the saint said:

"The high mountain is you, prince, and the snow is I, the humble one, who will soon depart from this life into eternal life."

Foreseeing by divine revelation his imminent end, the Hierarch of God himself, with his own hands, prepared a tomb for himself near the table of oblation in the church being built to the Most Holy Theotokos. When the tomb was ready, God again revealed to him his death. Filled with joy, the Hierarch went into the church and celebrated the Divine Service, praying for all the Orthodox tsars and princes, for his spiritual son, the pious Prince John, and for all the pious Christians of the Russian land; then he commemorated the departed and partook of the Holy Mysteries. Returning from the church, he summoned the entire clergy and, having given them instruction as was customary, dismissed them. At that time he gave away much alms to the poor and needy, to churches, monasteries, and clergy. Meanwhile, he was rapidly weakening in body. When the day of his death came, the saint summoned the

19. That is, the Dormition Cathedral; later, in the reign of Grand Prince John III Vasilyevich, on its site was built the cathedral that exists in its present form, consecrated in 1470.

thousandman Velyaminov, who was then governing the city (since the prince himself was not in the city at that time), and said to him:

"Behold, child, I am departing from this life; to my beloved son, Prince John, and to his posterity, I leave mercy, peace, and the blessing of God forever."

Then, having made other arrangements, St. Peter handed him a bag of money so that the building of the church might be completed. Having given peace to all, he began to sing Vespers, and while the prayer was still on his lips and he himself had raised his hands to God, his soul departed to the Lord.[20]

The prince, hearing of the repose of the Hierarch, hastened in grief with all the boyars to the city; the whole people wept and mourned his repose. Placing his honorable body on a bier, they carried him according to custom to the church.[8636]

At that time a certain man, possessed by unbelief, approached the body of the Hierarch in the midst of the Orthodox people and in his thoughts began to revile him, thinking:

"Who is this dead man, whom the prince himself and so many people escort, and why is such honor paid to him?"

As soon as he thought this, he immediately saw the Hierarch sitting upon the bier and blessing the people on both sides the whole time, until he was brought to the tomb. Then that man believed in the holiness of the Servant of God and told the people what he had seen. The holy relics of Peter were brought into the church and placed in the stone tomb prepared by himself, where they rest even now, sending forth various miracles to those who come to them in faith. A certain youth from birth had hands that were paralyzed and completely immobile, so that he could not bring them to his lips. He came to the tomb of this Hierarch, praying with tears, and immediately his hands were strengthened and became healthy. The saint also healed one who was bent over and granted hearing to one who was deaf. And to one who had been blind for many years, when he came and prayed, he suddenly opened his eyes. Many other benefactions, even now, are wondrously

20. St. Metropolitan Peter reposed on 21 December 1326.

bestowed upon those who come in faith to the honorable reliquary of St. Peter, to the honor and glory of God, who is glorified in the Trinity, forever. Amen.

Troparion, Tone 4:

"O thou land that wast formerly barren, rejoice now, for Christ hath shown thee a lamp, shining clearly in the world and healing our infirmities and diseases. Therefore rejoice and be glad with boldness, for he is the Hierarch of the Most High, who worketh these things."

Another Troparion, Tone 8:

"Rejoice brightly, most blessed city of Moscow, having within thee the hierarch Peter as the sun's dawn, illuminating all Russia with miracles; for he healeth infirmities and driveth diseases away like darkness from those who cry unto him: Rejoice, O hierarch of the Most High God, who worketh these things through thee for thy flock."

Kontakion, Tone 8:

"To the chosen and wondrous wonderworker of our land, we who come today with love to thee weave a song, O God-bearer: for having boldness before the Lord, deliver us from manifold distresses, that we may cry to thee: Rejoice, firm foundation of our city."

* * *

Memory of the Holy Martyr Themistocles

Память святого Мученика Фемистоклея

St. Themistocles lived in the reign of Decius and was a shepherd of sheep in the city of Myra in Lycia.[21] At that time the local governor Asclepius, by order of the emperor, raised persecution

21. Lycia, the southern coastal region of Asia Minor, formed part of the Prefecture of Pamphylia. Emperor Theodosius separated it from Pamphylia, and Myra became its capital. After 395 Lycia became a region of the Byzantine Empire, and from the sixth century it has been under Muslim rule.

against the Christians and, among others, sought St. Dioscorides,[22] who, hiding, fled into the mountains. Those sent to search for Dioscorides met Themistocles, who was tending sheep, and asked him about Dioscorides, but he did not reveal the one who was hiding, saying:

"There is no one here!"

But he delivered himself up, declaring himself a Christian and confessing Christ before them. Themistocles was brought before Asclepius, the governor of the region. The governor ordered him to be beaten, and the saint was struck on the belly until it burst; then they hanged him on a tree. After that, taking him down from the tree, they dragged the martyr over iron with sharp spikes, so that his whole body was wounded and cut. Thus he gave up his spirit to God.[23]

* * *

NOTES

8636. The holy relics of Metropolitan Peter were laid in the Church of the Dormition, which he had begun but not finished; it was completed and consecrated in the following year, 1327. At the invasion of Tokhtamysh, the Tatars plundered the tomb of St. Metropolitan Peter, thinking to find treasures in it; at that same time the Dormition Cathedral suffered a devastating fire. In 1471, when the old Dormition Cathedral was dismantled and a new one begun, the assembled Holy Council decided to remove the saint's relics. His coffin was found destroyed by the fire, but the holy relics of God's servant were preserved whole and unharmed. The translation of his relics was accomplished, and in memory of it the feast of this translation was established on 24 August. The relics of the first hierarch of Moscow rested openly, but after the Polish invasion, when they plundered the precious silver shrine, they were placed beneath a covering and remained in this state until 1812. In that year Napoleon opened the tomb of the hierarch, probably with the same purpose as Tokhtamysh. After the departure of the French from Moscow, Archbishop Augustine of Moscow solemnly opened the incorrupt relics of Metropolitan Peter, and they were carried around the Dormition Cathedral at its consecration on 30 August 1813. Two teachings of St. Peter remain, having the character of encyclical epistles.

22. The commemoration of St. Dioscorides is on the same day, 21 December.
23. St. Themistocles reposed in 251.

THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF DECEMBER

December 22

22 декабря

New Calendar December 22 · Old Calendar January 4 (civil dates)

Suffering of the Holy Great Martyr Anastasia the Deliverer of Prisoners, of Chrysogonus her teacher, of Theodotia, and of others who suffered with her

Страдание святой великомученицы Анастасии Узорешительницы, Хрисогона, учителя ее, Феодотии и других с нею пострадавших

St. Anastasia was born in the famous city of Rome. She was distinguished by her nobility, by her beauty of soul and body, and by her good disposition and gentleness. Her father, named Praetextatus, was a senator and professed the Hellenic pagan faith. Her mother, named Fausta, believed in Christ. In her girlhood Anastasia was entrusted by her mother to a worthy man for instruction, known for his learning and still more for his piety. His name was Chrysogonus. He was a Christian, well versed in the Divine teaching of Christ, and afterwards became a martyr. From this holy man Anastasia learned not only letters; she also learned to know Him who is the beginning of all things visible and invisible, the goal of all pious desires of the heart, the one true God, the Creator and Perfecter of all. And she began diligently to read the Christian books, meditating on the law of the Lord day and night, and establishing her heart in love for God.

When Anastasia had completed her studies with Chrysogonus, she was unanimously praised as a wise and beautiful maiden.

Meanwhile the blessed mother of Anastasia, Fausta, departed from this life. Her father, however, against her wishes, gave her in marriage to a certain Pompeius, likewise of senatorial family and professing the Hellenic faith, and Anastasia was led into the house of her bridegroom, a faithful woman to an unbeliever, a lamb of Christ to a wolf. But God,

to Whom her sobs were raised and before Whom she prayed day and night, preserved her. The saint did not lose her virginity, and the unclean man did not defile her pure body. Anastasia pretended that she had a constant and incurable female illness, and said that she could not be a wife to her husband. At times the husband, by force and wrestling, sought to obtain from her the satisfaction of his lust, but Anastasia, with the invisible help of her Guardian Angel, tore herself from his hands, and so she remained an undefiled virgin.

Often, laying aside her luxurious garments and precious adornments and secretly putting on the beggar's rags, Anastasia went out of the house unknown to all except one servant-woman who accompanied her without fail. With this servant-woman Anastasia visited all the prisons, buying from the guards with gold entrance to them, and visited those who suffered for Christ's sake, serving them with reverence and zeal as far as she could. She washed the hands and feet of the prisoners, cleansed their tangled hair full of dirt, wiped away their blood, bound their wounds with clean linen, and gave each one food and drink. Then, having served them sufficiently, she returned home.

In these activities she often had to leave the house, and this did not escape her husband. He learned that Anastasia was visiting the prisoners, and he became still more angry with her, all the more so since he had previously been irritated with the saint for her refusal to live with him as a husband and had often vexed her on that account. And he learned of Anastasia's doings from the servant-woman who accompanied her; this treacherous woman told him everything.

Having cruelly beaten Anastasia, her lawless husband shut the saint up in a separate room, setting a guard over her, so that she could not leave the room. And the saint grieved in spirit for the prisoners for Christ, that she could not visit them, serve them, or supply them with all that they needed. Especially did Anastasia's heart ache for her holy teacher Chrysogonus, whom she could not see.

For two years already the holy Chrysogonus had endured many different torments while in prison. When she was at liberty, Anastasia had often come to him. Now, being confined and under vigilant watch, she could not visit her teacher.

Her husband oppressed Anastasia especially after the death of this pious wife's father, Praetextatus. All of Praetextatus' considerable estate passed by inheritance to Anastasia as his only daughter, for he had no other children or relatives. Then Pompeius, taking advantage of his father-in-law's death, out of hatred for Anastasia because she would not yield to his carnal desires, planned to kill her so that he might inherit all her property and live with another wife on someone else's money. Treating the saint as a captive and a slave, he daily tormented and tortured her. This is known from her letter, which she secretly wrote to Chrysogonus and sent through an elderly woman. Here is that letter: "To the holy Confessor of Christ, Chrysogonus, from Anastasia. My father was an idolater; but my mother Fausta always lived a pure and pious Christian life, and she made me a Christian from my earliest swaddling clothes. After her death I took upon myself the heavy yoke of marriage to a pagan. But, by God's mercy toward me, I successfully avoided his bed, pretending to be ill, and now by day and by night I embrace the feet of my Lord Jesus Christ. My husband, with unworthy and vile idolaters, squanders my inheritance, boasting of my wealth as if it were his own, and me, as a sorceress and an opponent of his pagan faith, he so torments in such harsh confinement that nothing remains for me but to yield up my spirit to the Lord and fall dead. Surely I should rejoice that, having suffered for the Lord, I shall die confessing Him, but I deeply grieve to see all my riches, which I had promised to God, squandered by the hands of wicked and God-opposing men. Therefore I ask you, man of God, to pray diligently to the Lord Christ, that He either leave my husband alive, if He knows that he will one day believe, or, if he continues to remain in unbelief, that He command him to depart from among the living and give place to those who honor God. Better for him to die than not to confess the Son of God and to hinder those who confess Him. I call Christ to witness that if I am set free, I will spend my life in the service of the saints and will diligently care for them, as I have already begun to do... Save yourself, man of God, and have mercy on me." To this letter to St. Anastasia came the following reply: "Chrysogonus to Anastasia. Soon there will come to you, troubled by the storm and turmoil of this world, Christ, who walks

upon the waters, and with a single word He will still the winds of hostile slander rising against you. Remaining in the midst of the troubled sea, patiently await Christ, who will come to you, and ceaselessly cry out with the words of the prophet: 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, my Savior and my God' (Ps. 41:6). Expect from God a double recompense. For the temporal inheritance will be returned to you and the heavenly one will be bestowed upon you; the Lord from time to time permits evil and delays His benefactions, so that we may not drowse in security. Do not be dismayed when you see calamities befalling people who live in piety. The Lord does not reject you but tests you. Know also that the protection given by human hand is not firm, according to the word of Scripture: 'Cursed is the man who trusts in man, and blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord' (Jer. 17:5, 7). Guard yourself firmly and boldly from all sins, and seek consolation from the One God, keeping His holy commandments. Soon peaceful times will return to you. As after the darkness of night a bright day shines forth, and as after a harsh winter comes a warm spring, so golden and clear days will come to you, and then you will give temporal consolation to all who suffer for the name of Christ, and you yourself will surely be granted eternal blessedness... Save yourself in the Lord, and pray for me."

Soon Anastasia was destined to suffer new deadly injuries at the hands of her merciless, impious husband, and she again wrote a letter to the holy Chrysogonus. This is what was written in it: "To Chrysogonus, Confessor of Christ, from Anastasia. Remember me and pray for me, that the Lord, for love of Whom I endure the torments of which the elderly woman sent to you will tell you, may receive my soul."

The saint answered her: "Chrysogonus to Anastasia. Darkness always precedes light, and after sicknesses health often returns, and after death life is promised to us. One and the same end awaits everyone, both the fortunate and the suffering, so that the sorrowful may not be overcome by despair, and that people in joy may not give themselves over to self-conceit. One sea is the sea upon which the barques of our lives set out, and with one Helmsman our souls make their voyage. Some ships are stronger and pass through the storms without harm,

while others are frail boats, which even in calm water are near to sinking. Near is the time of destruction for those who do not think to come to the saving harbor. But you, pure servant of Christ, cleave with all your thought to the Cross of Christ and prepare yourself for the work of the Lord, and when you have served Christ by your own desire, then from torments you will pass in triumph into blessed life with Christ."

By this letter, St. Chrysogonus prophesied the speedy destruction of her cruel husband, Pompeius. And indeed, the latter was soon sent as an ambassador to the Persian king. Setting out on his journey, he had to travel by sea. The ship in which he sailed went down and sank during a sudden storm. Thus perished that wretched man. But St. Anastasia, preserving her virginity, escaped the hunter's net like a bird. Together with her freedom, she received all the inheritance left to her by her parents. And she began, now unhindered by anyone, to visit those imprisoned in the dungeons. She served the holy Passion-bearers of Christ not only with her possessions; she also comforted them, and by her prudent words stirred them to endure courageously and to face death for Christ without fear.

At that time, Emperor Diocletian was in Aquileia[1] and devoted all his concern to ensuring that not a single Christian should escape his hands in secret. He was informed from Rome that the prisons were filled with a great multitude of Christians, who, despite the many kinds of torments, would not deny their Christ, and that in all this they were strengthened by the Christian teacher Chrysogonus, to whom they were obedient, following his instructions in everything. The emperor ordered that all the Christians be subjected to torments and death, and that Chrysogonus be sent to him. He reasoned that if he overcame Chrysogonus's steadfastness, he would easily subdue the other Christians as well.

1. Aquileia: a city in upper Italy that arose from a Roman colony. It lay by the river Natisone, at a short distance from the Adriatic Sea. Soon after its founding Aquileia became a large trading city, through which military roads passed to the north and to the eastern lands around the Adriatic Sea. In the times of the empire it formed the vestibule of Italy, and therefore troops often gathered here. Later the city was completely destroyed by a savage barbarian people, the Huns, and part of its inhabitants fled into the lagoons of the river Po, where they took part in the founding of Venice.

When Chrysogonus was being led to the emperor for examination, Anastasia, too, followed her teacher from afar.

Seeing the holy man, the emperor began by conversing with him, gently urging him to renounce Christ.

"Take my good counsel, Chrysogonus," said the lawless ruler. "Join our faith, do what is pleasing to the gods, and choose what is pleasant instead of what is sorrowful, what is useful instead of what is unprofitable. Know that you will not only be delivered from torments and receive the freedom you so desire, but will also become ruler of the great city of Rome."

The saint answered him:

"I have come to know the One God, and He is dearer to me than all light and more desirable than all freedom. He is dearer to me than life itself, more precious than all treasures. In Him alone do I believe with my heart, confess Him with my lips, honor Him with my soul, and before all people bow my knees to Him. But I will not honor your many gods, in whom demons dwell; I think of them as Socrates[2] did, when he said of them: 'One must flee from them by every means, because they beguile people and are notorious destroyers of souls.' As for the gifts and honor you offer me, I esteem them no more than sleep and darkness."

The emperor could no longer bear to hear such bold words from Chrysogonus, and ordered the soldiers to seize him, lead him to a deserted place, and behead him. The saint's body was cast upon the seashore[3], not far from the dwelling of a presbyter named Zoilus, a man of holy life, and three maidens—sisters in body and spirit—Agapia, Chionia, and Irene. By revelation from God, this presbyter learned of

2. Socrates was an ancient Greek sage and philosopher who lived in Athens in the fifth and the early fourth centuries before Christ. He held a lofty view of the world that far outstripped that of his contemporaries. Among other things, he did not believe in many of the pagan gods and was a monotheist, that is, he affirmed that there exists only one God. For this reason Socrates was accused of impiety, and for this, as well as for supposedly corrupting the youth (which was unjust), he was condemned to death by poisoning. In May 399 B.C. Socrates drank a cup of hemlock and died, surrounded by his disciples and admirers. Among the disciples of this philosopher the most famous is Plato, who, like his teacher, was also a monotheist.

3. The Adriatic Sea is meant here. It forms a gulf of the Mediterranean and lies between Italy and the Balkan Peninsula.

the body of St. Chrysogonus, took it together with the severed head, placed it in a coffin, and hid it in his house[4]. After thirty days had passed, St. Chrysogonus appeared to him in a vision and said:

"Know that within the next nine days, three maidens of Christ who live near you will be taken to suffer torments. Tell the handmaiden of the Lord, Anastasia, to care for them, encouraging them to the contest of courage until they are crowned with martyr's crowns. You, too, be of good hope, for you shall receive the sweet fruits of your labors. Soon you also will be released from this life and led to Christ with those who have suffered for Him."

The same revelation was also granted to St. Anastasia. And so, inspired by the Spirit of God, she came to the house of a presbyter whom she had never known and asked him:

"Where are the maidens whose martyr's end was revealed to him in a vision?"

Then, learning where they lived, she went to them and spent the night with them, speaking with them of the love of God and the salvation of the soul. By her words she exhorted them to stand courageously for Christ, their Bridegroom, even unto blood. At the house of the presbyter Zoilus she saw the relics of the holy martyr of Christ, Chrysogonus, her beloved teacher, and wept many warm tears over them, commending herself to his prayers. Then she returned to Aquileia.

Soon afterward, the prophecy of St. Chrysogonus to the presbyter Zoilus was fulfilled. After nine days had passed, the presbyter departed to the Lord, while the holy virgins Agapia, Chionia, and Irene were seized and brought before Emperor Diocletian for examination. For a long time he urged them to sacrifice to idols, resorting now to blandishments, now to threats; but he did not succeed, and at last he cast them into prison.

St. Anastasia, as was her custom, visited those in prison and came to the holy virgins, comforting them and inspiring in them trust in

4. The honorable head of St. Chrysogonus was later transferred to Rome, where, already under Pope Symmachus (498–514), a church in honor of the martyr existed and his head was kept there. The body of the saint is in Venice.

Christ's unfailing help and hope of a glorious victory over the enemies of the Lord.

Meanwhile, the emperor had to depart for Macedonia[5] on affairs of state, and so the holy virgins were entrusted to the torturer Dulcitius, who tormented and tortured them, then handed them over to a certain count, Sisinius[6], for further punishment. The latter cast the holy Agapia and Chionia into the fire. There they gave their spirits to God, leaving their bodies whole and unharmed in the flames. As for St. Irene, one of Sisinius's soldiers wounded her with an arrow from a taut bow, after which the saint died. St. Anastasia took their pure bodies, wrapped them in white shrouds with fragrant spices, and reverently laid them in a chosen place, blessing their sufferings.

Then Anastasia began to pass from city to city and from country to country, serving Christians everywhere who were held in bonds. At her own expense she provided prisoners with food and drink, clothing, and all that they needed, and gave medical care to the sick. She was a comfort to all who were sorely tried and weakened in body, and with gold she bought relief for them from their long and grievous bonds. Therefore Anastasia was called the Deliverer from Bonds, for by her secret care she loosed the bonds of many. She brought relief to some; others, treating them with her own hands, she healed of incurable wounds; and others, who were half-dead, she revived through her care, giving them health and strength for the new torments that awaited them.

Desiring to help the sick and afflicted, she learned the art of medicine and treated the wounded herself. She did not disdain to carry in her arms those who could use neither their hands nor their feet, broken or ulcerated for Christ's sake; she herself put food into their mouths, gave them drink, cleansed away the pus from their wounds, and bound their sores. Her only gladness and joy was to serve Christ Himself in the persons of those who suffered for confessing the sweetest name of

5. Macedonia was the name of the country lying north of Hellas (Greece), between the Adriatic and the Archipelago seas. Today two provinces forming part of European Turkey are located here: one in the east, bearing the ancient name of Macedonia, and the other in the west, called Albania.

6. Comites were the companions (retinue) of the highest official in the provinces, and later also the companions of the emperors.

Christ. With all her strength she cared for this; by every means she sought it, and, laboring in this work with all her soul, she overcame her natural weakness, distinguished by magnanimity and courage, love of God and neighbor, and care for the holy sufferers, who are ever near to God, and of whom she said with David: "How precious are Thy thoughts unto me, O God" (Ps. 138:17).

While she was in Macedonia, engaged in her customary work, St. Anastasia the Deliverer from Bonds made the acquaintance of a very young widow named Theodotia, who was from the land of Bithynia, from the city of Nicaea[7]. After her husband's death, she was left with three infant sons and lived in Macedonia, spending the days of her widowhood in fervent confession of Christianity and in pious labors. The blessed Anastasia often stayed with this widow, loved her as a faithful handmaiden of Christ, and delighted in sweet conversation with her about the sweetest love of God, for which so many saints had laid down their lives. In time, it became known that Theodotia was a Christian, and the honorable widow was seized and brought before the emperor for examination.

As she stood before this impious tribunal, one of the emperor's attendants, named Leucadius, was captivated by her beauty, for she was fair and comely. He asked the emperor not to kill Theodotia, but to give her to him so that he might marry her. The emperor agreed, hoping that a husband would more readily turn her to idol worship.

Leucadius took Theodotia and her children to his house, and did everything and said everything he could, pleading with her, exhorting her, flattering and threatening her, so that she would renounce Christ and become his wife. Theodotia answered him:

"If you are seeking to make me your wife because you desire my wealth and estates, then I freely give you everything; only leave me to labor for Christ, so that, in place of all riches, I may inherit Christ alone. But if you desire me because you are drawn to my beauty and think to turn me away from my Christ, know that you are striving for the impossible. For you would sooner turn my beauty into ugliness and

7. Nicaea was a city situated not far from Bithynia.

my life into death than tear my mind away from Christ or compel me to consent to marry you."

At that time Leucadius had to accompany the emperor, who was setting out somewhere. He departed, leaving Theodotia in his house, and was long away. Theodotia, somewhat relieved, served the prisoners together with St. Anastasia: she healed the sick, buried the dead, and strengthened the living for great exploits. And then it was reported to Diocletian again that the prisons in the cities were filled with Christians, and that there was no room to house other prisoners. Then the impious tormentor commanded that all the prisoners be put to death by various kinds of execution, so that the prisons, being emptied, could receive other Christians. One night was appointed for this, during which a great multitude of martyrs was called to the unfading Day, Christ the Lord. Some died by the sword, others were drowned in water, some were burned in fiery furnaces, and others were taken alive into the bowels of the earth: deep trenches and pits were filled with people and covered over with earth and stones.

In the morning the Christ-loving and blessed Anastasia, as was her custom, came to one of the prisons and, finding none of the honorable sufferers there, filled the air with mournful cries and weeping. When the soldiers who happened to be there asked her why she wept so, she answered:

"I am seeking the servants of my God who were in this prison yesterday, and now I do not know where they are."

The soldiers, seeing that she was a Christian, at once seized her and led her to Florus, the commander of the Illyrian province[8]. When the saint was brought before the governor, he asked her:

"Are you a Christian?"

St. Anastasia answered:

8. Illyria occupied the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, bounded on the northwest by the river Sava and on the southeast by the Drina. At present Dalmatia, Bosnia with Herzegovina, and a small part of Albania are located here. Illyria lay adjacent to Macedonia, so that St. Anastasia, while bestowing her benefactions on prisoners in the dungeons of Macedonia, could also go into the Illyrian territories, which is why she was brought before the Illyrian hegemon.

"Truly I am a Christian. What seems abominable to you is dear to me. And the name of Christian, which you consider a disgrace, is honorable and glorious to me."

Then the governor began to question Anastasia about her origin, and learning that she was of a well-known Roman family, he asked with astonishment:

"What moved you to leave Rome, your glorious homeland, and come here?"

The saint answered him:

"Nothing other than only the voice of my Lord, who called me to Himself. Hearkening to this voice, I left my homeland and friends, took up the Cross of my Christ, and went boldly and joyfully after Christ."

The governor said to this:

"Where is that Christ whom you confess?" Anastasia answered:

"There is no place in which Christ is not. He is in heaven, in the sea, and on earth; He dwells in all who call upon Him and fear Him, enlightening their minds and always being with them."

The governor asked:

"Where then are the people who fear your Christ, of whom you speak? Tell us, that we may know them."

The saint answered:

"Until now they were with us on earth, living in the body; but now, having left the lower world, they are in heaven and look down upon us from on high. Death, accepted for Christ, has brought them this blessedness. And I desire to be among their number and to go the same way as they."

The governor could do nothing with the noble Roman woman before the emperor learned of her, and so he, having described everything concerning Anastasia, sent it to Diocletian in a special report. Diocletian had known the parents of Anastasia and her husband, as well as herself. Realizing that she was spending her property, which she had received from her parents, on poor Christians, he commanded that the saint be brought to him; and when he saw her, he began to question her about her means, for he loved riches more than his gods.

"Where are your riches that remained to you after your father? " The saint boldly answered:

"If there remained to me anything more of the treasures and estates with which I could still serve the servants of my Christ, I would not have delivered myself into the hands of men who seek Christian blood. But now I have already spent all my possessions, which I offered in sacrifice to Christ, and I have left only my body; therefore I strive to offer this too as a gift to my God."

Seeing how freely the saint spoke, and perceiving her courage, the emperor lost hope of overcoming her with words and of obtaining anything from her riches, the exhaustion of which he had just heard of. He was afraid to enter into further conversation with her, lest she shame him with her wise words, and he commanded that she be taken to the provincial governor, saying:

"It is not fitting for the imperial majesty to converse with a foolish woman."

The provincial governor kindly asked St. Anastasia:

"Why do you not wish to offer sacrifices to the gods as your father offered them? Why have you abandoned them and honor Christ? For you do not know Him: He was born among the Jews and was killed by them as a criminal."

Anastasia answered:

"In my house too there were gods and goddesses, of gold, silver and bronze. I saw them standing idle, serving only as a seat for birds and a dwelling for spiders and flies. Therefore I cast the gods and goddesses into the fire, freeing them from the dishonor which the birds, spiders and flies inflicted upon them. And out of the fire they came forth to me as coins of gold, silver and bronze. With that money I fed many who were hungry, clothed the naked, helped the infirm, and satisfied the needy. Thus from those gods which stood without work and without profit, I drew profit for many."

Hearing such words, the provincial governor cried out in rage:

"I do not even wish to hear of your godless deed." Then the saint answered with a smile:

"I am amazed at your reason, judge. How can you call my deed a godless deed? If those lifeless idols had even one feeling or some kind of power, what would have prevented them from freeing themselves from the hands of those who destroyed them, or from avenging themselves upon the destroyers, or, finally, from crying out and calling you for help? But they do not even know themselves; they do not know what is being done to them."

Interrupting the saint's speech, the judge said:

"Our divine emperor has commanded you, setting aside all idle talk, to do one of two things: either to consent to offer sacrifice to the gods or to perish by an evil death."

The saint answered to this that to die for Christ is not to perish, but to enter into eternal life.

Seeing, after a long conversation, that the saint was unyielding, the provincial governor reported this to the emperor. Diocletian, in great anger, began to consider what to do with St. Anastasia. Someone of his attendants advised the emperor to hand her over to Ulpian, the priest of the Capitol[9], that he might persuade her to renounce Christ, or compel her by tortures, or, if she did not submit, put her to death, and that if any property remained after her death, he should take it to the Capitol. This counsel pleased the emperor, and he handed St. Anastasia over to Ulpian, the chief priest of all the gods.

Ulpian honorably brought her into his house, reckoning to ensnare her by flattery rather than by threats. After long, kindly persuasions he offered her a choice of opposite things, containing all the splendor of the world and every kind of instrument of torment, arranged over against one another: on one side precious stones, and on the other two-edged knives; here golden couches adorned with precious crystal work, and there iron beds made red-hot and filled with burning coals; here

9. The Capitol was the central citadel of Rome, located on the Capitoline Hill, where the highest governmental institutions of the empire were concentrated. Here stood the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, which was considered the principal sanctuary of Rome and in which sessions of the senate often took place, both on religious and on state matters. This temple was twice destroyed, and each time it was restored with great splendor. The last time it was restored by the emperor Domitian (in 62 or 70 A.D.). The high priest at the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in pagan Rome enjoyed great honor and enormous significance in the state.

necklaces[10], earrings, various gold and pearl adornments, and there shackles, chains and iron bonds. Here bright mirrors and all manner of women's attire, and there iron combs and hooks designed to tear the flesh. On one side costly garments, on the other shards and wood shavings, with which the tormentors were accustomed to irritate the wounds inflicted upon the martyrs.

Why did this deceitful and crafty man do so? Why did he set over against objects of luxury objects of torture and suffering, against things that delight things that cause dejection, and against things that flatter things that are terrible? In order to entice the bride of Christ with one or frighten her with the other. But she paid no attention to any of it: she desired nothing that pleases, she did not fear, nor did she wish to flee from things that cause grief and dejection, and she looked upon the instruments of torment more willingly than upon women's adornments. Thus it happened to the wretched man what the prophet says: "iniquity has lied to itself" (Ps. 36:12), and the crafty priest, unaware, arranged everything to his own shame and disgrace; for Anastasia then showed still greater courage and love for Christ, so that the whole vanity of the pagan priest's cunning design was revealed and the futility of his guile. When he said to the saint:

"Choose for yourself from either side whatever you wish."

She, looking at the objects of luxury and the precious things set out before her, said:

"All this is yours, devil, and of those who work for you, and with them you will be in eternal perdition."

Then, looking at the chains and instruments of torment, St. Anastasia said:

"Surrounded by these things, I shall become more beautiful and more pleasing to my longed-for Bridegroom, Christ. This I choose, and that I reject; this I love for the sake of my beloved Lord, and that I hate."

10. A monisto was a neck ornament consisting of a chain or cord with coins, in the form of a necklace. An interesting example of the monisto is found in Ravenna (in Italy), in the church of St. Vitalis, in a mosaic depicting the Empress Theodora accompanied by women; all the women wear monistos, more or less rich and consisting of several rows of ornaments.

Then the priest, sparing her and not losing hope that she would change her mind, gave her three days for reflection. But the martyr, grieved, said:

"Why delay? Why do you not wish to torment me right now? You will hear nothing else from me than what I say now: I will not offer sacrifice to your gods, nor will I fulfill your will and that of your emperor; but I will offer the sacrifice of praise to the King of the ages, the one immortal God, for whom I lay down my soul. The tortures with which you threaten I despise, since I desire to acquire nothing but Christ alone, in whom is eternal life."

The priest asked her:

"Do you too choose for yourself a death like Christ's?"

The martyr, hearing of the death of Christ, was filled with joy and said:

"Amen, amen! So be it with me, Christ, my King!"

The priest asked:

What does this word "amen" mean?

The Saint answered:

"You are not worthy either to understand or to pronounce this word.[11] No reasonable person pours precious myrrh into a rotten vessel."

Then Ulpian commanded that St. Anastasia be taken for three days to women she knew, who had once been her neighbors and friends, so that they might persuade her to return to the gods of her fathers. What did those crafty and impious women not do! What counsels, what tender and pleasing words, suited to women, did they not whisper to Anastasia, reminding her of the beauty and sweetness of the world! But the Saint was like a deaf woman who does not hear, and like a mute who does not open her mouth. During those three days she took no food or drink into her mouth, but unceasingly cried out in her heart to her Bridegroom Christ. After three days the chief priest Ulpian, seeing

11. "Amen" is a Hebrew word and means: truly, verily, so be it. This word often occurs in the sacred books of both the Old and the New Testament, and once it is even applied to the Son of God Himself, who is the eternal Truth (Rev. 3:14). From the most ancient times the word "amen" has also been used in Christian worship.

that St. Anastasia was firm in the confession of the faith, like an unshakable pillar and an immovable mountain, condemned her to torments. But first this wretched man, wounded by her beauty, desired to defile the pure dove of Christ with his impurity. However, when this impious man wished to touch her, he suddenly went blind, a terrible pain gripped his head, and, like a madman, he shouted and called upon his gods, begging for help. He commanded that he be carried to the idol temple, hoping to receive help from those whom he served; but instead of help he received great harm, and instead of life, death, for he cast out his wicked soul and passed over to his gods, into hell. The report of this miracle spread among many, and the holy martyr Anastasia remained free. Going out from there, she went to her aforementioned spiritual sister Theodotia, who was still staying in the house of the city prefect Leucadius, and told her in detail all that she had endured, and of the miracle which God had performed through her, showing His mercy upon her. Soon after this Leucadius returned from Bithynia. He took up his old ways again and, as before, tried by turns with caresses and threats to persuade Theodotia to two lawless acts: to bow down to his impious gods and to enter into a shameful and hateful marriage with him for her. At last, having exhausted all his efforts and seeing that he could accomplish nothing because of Anastasia's presence there, the cruel man was inflamed with still greater anger: he put Anastasia in chains and delivered her to judgment, and sent Theodotia with her children, bound, to Bithynia to the anphipatus Nicetas,[12] writing him a letter about everything concerning Theodotia.

When the blessed Theodotia was brought before this proconsul, the latter, at the interrogation, began to threaten her with torments. To this, Theodotia's eldest son, named Evodus, a small boy, said to the proconsul:

"We, judge, do not fear the tortures which give the body incorruption and the soul immortality. We fear God, who can destroy both soul and body in the fiery Gehenna."

The judge, hearing such words, immediately commanded that the youth be beaten with rods until blood flowed, in his mother's presence.

The mother, looking on, rejoiced and strengthened her son with divine words, urging him to endure every suffering manfully. After this torture Theodotia was given to a shameless man named Hirtacus, that he might defile her. But as soon as he, approaching the chaste servant of God, wished to touch her, he saw a bright youth standing beside her, who, looking at him sternly, struck him in the face so hard that he was bloodied. The anphipatus too clearly saw this miracle, but instead of recognizing God, who keeps the chastity of the chaste, he became still more frenzied, ascribing it to the spells of sorcery. He commanded that a furnace be heated as hot as possible and that the mother with her three children be thrown into it. And St. Theodotia, with the blessed fruit of her womb, became a sacrifice pleasing to God: she died in the fire.[13]

At this time St. Anastasia was held in chains by the Illyrian eparch.

This man was covetous, and, hearing that Anastasia possessed great wealth, he secretly commanded that she be brought to him and said to her:

"I know that you are rich and have much money and estates. Moreover, you hold to the Christian faith, which you do not even conceal. Fulfill then the commandment of your Christ, who bids you despise all riches and be poor. Yield to me your wealth and make me the heir of your estate. Doing so, you will gain a double advantage: you will fulfill the commandment of Christ, and, freed from our hands, you will serve your God without fear and without hindrance."

The wise Anastasia prudently answered:

– The Gospel contains the word of my Lord: "Sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven" (Mt. 19:21). Who would be so mad as to give you, a rich man, what belongs to the poor? Who would be so unreasonable as to give to you, who wallow in luxury and live in delights and self-indulgence, the food of the poor? If I were to see you hungry and thirsty, naked and sick and cast into pris-

12. Anthypatos was the title of the highest provincial governor, under whose authority several provinces were placed, with their rulers, called hegemons.

13. The place of the sufferings and martyr's death of St. Theodotia with her sons was the city of Nicaea, in Bithynia.

on, then I would do for you, as is fitting, everything that Christ has commanded us: I would feed you, give you drink, clothe you, visit you, serve you, help you, giving you all that you need (Mt. 26:34–45).

The eparch was angered at these words and, in fury, commanded that the Saint be shut up in a dark dungeon and starved for thirty days. But she was sustained by her hope, Christ the Lord: He was her sweet food and her consolation in sorrow. Every night the holy martyr Theodotia appeared to her, filled her heart with joy and strengthened her. Anastasia spoke with the blessed one about many things and questioned her about many things. Among other things she asked her:

"How do you come to me after death?"

Theodotia explained to her that a special grace has been granted by God to the souls of martyrs, so that even after their departure from the earth they can come to whomever they wish, converse with them and comfort them.

At the end of thirty days the eparch, seeing that Anastasia had not grown weak from hunger and remained healthy and bright of countenance, grew enraged against the guards, thinking they had been bringing her food. At last he commanded that she be placed in a stronger dungeon, sealed the entrance with his own seal, and, posting the most trustworthy guards, starved and parched St. Anastasia for another thirty days. And during this time the holy martyr fed day and night on tears alone and prayed fervently to God. At the end of these thirty days the eparch brought Anastasia out of the dungeon and, seeing that she had again not changed in her appearance, condemned her to death together with others sentenced to execution for various crimes. All of them were ordered to be drowned in the sea.

Among the condemned was one pious man, named Eutychian, who for Christ's sake had been deprived of all his property; he was condemned to the same death. And so they were all placed on a ship and sailed out with them into the sea. Having reached the deep, the soldiers bored several holes in the ship, and themselves transferred into a boat prepared specially for this and rowed to shore. And when the ship was about to sink, those on board suddenly saw the holy martyr Theodotia steering the sails and guiding the ship to the shore, which it soon

reached. All the condemned, seeing their deliverance from drowning, were astonished, and, falling at the feet of the two Christians, Eutychian and Anastasia, begged them to enlighten them with the faith of Christ.

Having come safely ashore, they received the teaching of the faith from Eutychian and Anastasia and were baptized. The number of souls saved from drowning and who believed in Christ was one hundred and twenty.

The eparch, soon learning of this, was enraged and issued an order to seize them and put them to death by every kind of execution, while the martyr Anastasia was stretched between four posts and burned. Thus the blessed Anastasia the Unbinder completed her passion-bearing feat: she was released from the bonds of the flesh and passed over to the desired heavenly freedom.[14] Her honorable body, undamaged by the fire, was requested from the eparch's wife by a pious woman, Apollinaria, who buried it with honor in her vineyard. Later, when the persecution against the Church ceased, she erected a church over the martyr's grave.

Many more years passed, and the honorable relics of St. Anastasia were glorified. Then with great honor they were transferred to the royal city of Constantinople, as a protection and salvation for the city, to the glory of Christ our God, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, glorified in one Godhead unto ages of ages. Amen.

Kontakion, Tone 2:

Those who are in temptations and sorrows, coming running to thy temple, receive honorable gifts from the divine grace dwelling in thee, O Anastasia; for thou always pourest out healings upon the world.

* * *



14. This took place about 304, on December 22.

THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF DECEMBER

December 23

23 декабря

New Calendar December 23 · Old Calendar January 5 (civil dates)

Life of Our Holy Father Niphon, Bishop of Cyprus

Житие святого отца нашего Нифонта, епископа Кипрского

Venerable Niphon was a native of the land of Paphlagonia, from the city of Plagiona[1], and was the son of a distinguished man named Agapitus. In his youth he was entrusted to the voivode Sabbatius, who had been sent from Constantinople to Paphlagonia by the Emperor Constantine the Great. The voivode then sent the youth, for his education, with his protovestiarius[2] to Constantinople, to his wife. The youth began to study under the presbyter Peter, who lived in the voivode's household, and he studied diligently and successfully, for he was capable of learning. In his early years Niphon was good, quiet, meek, humble, and he loved to go to church. But when he came of youthful age, he little by little began to be corrupted by evil companions. Young people, if they have not been brought up in the fear of God, readily yield to bad example. And if among grown men the good is easily corrupted by the wicked, as it is said: "With the froward thou wilt show thyself froward" (Ps. 17:27), this happens even more often among the young, who by nature are more inclined to evil than to good, as it is written: "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21). So the youthful Niphon began to lead an idle and slothful life, to eat without measure and to drink to excess; he learned from lawless youths idle talk and foul speech; he began to go to the performances of buffoons, then to shameful deeds, and spent all his nights with

1. In the northern part of Asia Minor.
2. The protovestiarius was one of the offices of the imperial Constantinopolitan court. The protovestiarius had the chief supervision of the imperial wardrobe (the wardrobe of robes).

his companions in lawlessness, defiling himself with impure sins. Besides this, he took to stealing, quarrelling and fighting with everyone, and he was a stumbling-block to other young men, since he not only committed every lawlessness himself, but also drew many others into the same. A certain acquaintance of Niphon, named Basil, kept saying to him:

"Woe to you, Niphon! You are alive in body, but already dead in soul, and only your shadow walks among men."

Niphon, however, now paid no attention to these words, now began to weep and lament over his sins; yet, continuing to follow his bad habits, he sank into shameful deeds as into a sea, and, despairing altogether of his salvation, he said:

"I am already lost and cannot return to repentance. At least let me enjoy the earthly sweetnesses here."

The devil so hardened the heart of Niphon that he could no longer pray at all, for it was as if a stone always lay upon his heart. And the lady with whom Niphon lived, seeing his dissolute life, said with heartfelt grief:

"Woe is me! Whence has this calamity come upon me?"

She many times admonished him, quarrelled with him, scolded and beat him, but he remained incorrigible. This is recounted in order to show how great is the mercy of God, by which He brings forth the honorable from the unworthy and makes righteous men out of sinners, and that there is no sin that exceeds the love for mankind of God. Let there be an example for us sinners too, that we who are plunged into many lawless deeds may not despair, but may amend ourselves by repentance, like Niphon. For he was, as it were, a vessel of sin, but afterwards, through true repentance, he became a vessel of the Holy Spirit, as we shall now learn from the following account.

Niphon had a friend named Nicodemus. Once Niphon came to him; Nicodemus looked at him and was horrified, gazing into his face with astonishment. Niphon asked him:

"Why do you look at me so, as if at a stranger?"

Nicodemus answered:

"Believe me, brother, I have never seen you as you are now: your face is terrible, like that of an Ethiopian."

At these words the youth was frightened, and at the same time he was ashamed; covering his face with his hand, he went away grieved. On the way he said to himself:

"Woe to me, a sinner! If in this world I am black in soul and in body, what shall I be at the judgment of God? How shall I appear before the face of God? Woe to me, wretched one! Where are you now, my soul? Woe to me! What shall I do? Can I still repent? Is there anyone who would instruct me to repentance and tell me whether I can yet be saved? How shall I say to God, 'Have mercy on me!', when I have done before Him so many shameful deeds?"

Niphon said much more to himself besides this, and at last came home sorrowful and weary; contrary thoughts struggled within him. A good thought said to him: "Pray to God at night; as He wills, so will He deal with you." But an evil thought opposed this, saying: "If you stand in prayer, you will lose your wits, you will become a fool, and everyone will laugh at you."

The demon put fear into his mind and greatly troubled his soul. He, however, having somewhat strengthened himself, said to himself:

"When I lived in debauchery, no evil befell me; can it be that now, when I want to pray to God, some evil will happen to me? Cursed be you, unclean and crafty demon, who suggest this to me!"

At night Niphon rose from his bed and began to weep and to beat his breast, saying:

"How piously and virtuously I lived in former years, but now I am dead, grievously wounded by my sins. But, 'O Lord my God, in Thee do I put my trust; save me, lest the devil like a lion tear away my soul, rending it, when there is none to deliver'" (Ps. 7:3).

As he stood in prayer and looked toward the east, suddenly a thick darkness enveloped him, drew near to him and cast him into weakness, sickness and immeasurable fear. In terror Niphon lay down upon his bed, weeping and lamenting over his sins. In the morning he went to church; lifting up his eyes, he looked at the icon of the Most Pure Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and with a cry he exclaimed:

"Have mercy on me, Protectress of Christians, O Pure One, full of joy! Help me by Thy great mercy, for Thou art the hope and expectation of the repentant."

At these words the image of the Mother of God smiled, and her face was joyful. Niphon, marvelling at seeing this wonder, rejoiced and was gladdened in heart, and said:

"O depth of the love for mankind of God! How great is Thy mercy, O Lord, which Thou showest toward those who have sinned against Thee! For them Thou hast given also Thy Most Pure Mother, that she may be an intercessor before Thy majesty!"

After a long prayer, having kissed the icon of the Most Pure Theotokos with love, he went out, saying to himself:

"Behold, wretched soul, how God loves us, and we ourselves flee from Him: behold, He has given us His Most Pure Mother as our protectress, and we reject even this Helper."

After that, in a dream, the devil appeared to him in the form of a youth, a former companion of his in lawlessness; he stood sorrowfully, as if in deep grief. Niphon looked at him and said:

"Why are you so grieved?"

The devil answered:

"Behold, it is already the third day since you went to your friend Nicodemus and were corrupted; I grieve over this and cannot bear that you have scorned me."

Then Niphon said:

"Why does this grieve you so?"

But the devil turned away and gave him no answer. At once Niphon awoke; he understood that the devil grieved over his repentance. He quickly rose, went to church, and, fixing his mind and eyes upon that icon of the Most Holy Theotokos, he prayed until he again saw her smiling and felt divine sweetness in his heart.

One day, as he was going to church for prayer, Niphon saw a man acting lawlessly on the road, and he judged him in his mind. Coming into the house of God and, as was his custom, looking at the icon, he suddenly saw the Most Pure Theotokos with an angry and stern face,

turning away from him. Niphon was horrified and, lowering his eyes, said to himself:

"Woe to me, a sinner! My one joy was Thy most holy image, O Lady; now even it turns away its face from me, and for what, I do not know!"

Then, reflecting within himself, he suddenly recalled how he had condemned the sinner, and understood that for this the Mother of the Lord had turned away her face from him. Weeping aloud, he said:

"O God, forgive me a sinner, for I have appropriated to myself Thy dignity and Thy authority and have condemned my neighbour before Thy judgment. But have mercy on me, O Master, my soul hopes in Thee; from this time I will never again judge my brother."

Niphon said much more with tears, and looking again at the icon, he saw that it was smiling as before; and from that time he carefully guarded himself against condemning others. So it always was: whenever he happened to sin in anything, the image of the Most Pure Mother of God turned away its face, and by this Niphon was instructed and amended himself.

Once, when Niphon was drawing water from a well with a bucket, the devil pushed him, and he, slipping with both feet, fell into the well; as he was falling down, he caught hold of the bucket and cried out:

"O Lady, help me!"

And at once he found himself standing unharmed on a beam over the well. From this time, understanding that the Mother of God was keeping him, Niphon always had her name on his lips. After this it happened that he fell ill, from the feast of the Resurrection of Christ to the day of Mid-Pentecost, and during this illness he said nothing else but:

"Glory to my God, glory to my helper, the Most Pure Virgin Mary."

On the Monday before the Wednesday of Mid-Pentecost he prayed thus:

"O Lord my God, grant that I may be made worthy to partake of Thy Holy Mysteries on the day of the Middle of Pentecost, for my soul greatly desires to be satisfied with Thy Flesh."

Then he fell asleep, and this vision came to him: two most bright women passed by his bed like the myrrh-bearing women; one, in a royal purple, held a branch of olive, and the other, like her, followed after her and carried a small vessel with some sacred thing, and a branch moistened with holy oil. Coming to the bed, they stopped. And the woman in the royal purple said to the other:

"Look, Anastasia, what does this youth suffer from?" Anastasia answered her[3]:

"He suffers, O Lady, from his unrestrained tongue, for when he was in health his lips never ceased; and now the Lord is chastising him, so that he may not be condemned there together with the whole world. For God loves him greatly and chastens him. But Thou, O Lady, if Thou wishest, have mercy on him and help him."

The Woman in the royal purple answered:

"I will have mercy, only lead him to where we are going." Anastasia took him by the hand and led him into the church of the Holy Apostles. Then the Woman in the royal purple said to her:

"Take oil from the lamp burning in the sanctuary, and anoint him from head to foot."

She anointed him, and said:

"Behold, Lady, I have done as Thou didst command."

The Woman in the royal purple smiled and said:

"This is the sign of mercy for which we came."

And she gave Niphon the olive branch she held in her hand, with these words:

"Look and understand that this branch is from the grace of the Lord. I give it to thee, for now the mercy of the all-merciful God has been poured out upon thee. Now struggle with the demons, and thou shalt overcome them as easily as reeds or hay."

Niphon bowed at her feet, and awaking, understood that the vision signified the blessing of the Most Pure Theotokos. He immediately recovered and rose from his bed. On Tuesday he partook of food, and on the very day of the Mid-Pentecost he came to church and with great joy

3. Here is meant the holy Martyr Anastasia the Deliverer from Bonds, whose memory is celebrated December 22.

received the Divine Mysteries. Thus, by the help of God, the blessed Niphon left his former sinful life, withdrew from the world, and became a monk. He began to labor diligently and to toil intensely, mortifying his body and bringing it into subjection to the spirit, spending his days in tears and in strict repentance. He carefully kept his lips from idle talk, and still more from foul speech and slander, and he made it his rule to strike himself forcefully forty times on the face whenever through carelessness he happened to utter some unseemly or abusive word. Sometimes, placing a stone in his mouth, he carried it for a long time, saying to himself:

"It is better for thee, lawless one, to eat stones than to speak any evil words."

Often, shutting himself in his hut and stripping himself, he beat his whole body with something so hard that sometimes pieces of flesh fell away from his wounds. Thus he struggled persistently with the invisible enemy, but the enemy waged a fierce battle against him, inflicting every kind of harm and desiring to overcome his invincible courage. During prayer the demon appeared to him, now in the form of a bird hopping before him, now in the form of a black dog rushing at him to frighten him and interrupt his prayer, but he drove the demon away with the sign of the Cross. When he felt hunger, the demon brought him various fish and meat dishes and delicacies, but the blessed one would then say:

"Food does not bring us nearer to God[4]. Eat your own food yourself, devil, or carry it to where people make their belly a god."

When the saint kept vigil, the devil brought drowsiness and deep sleep upon him, but the blessed one, sensing this, took a stick and struck himself painfully, saying:

"I have given thee food and drink, and now thou wantest sleep as well. Behold, I will quiet thee with this stick."

If he ever felt carnal desire, he would for a whole week not take bread into his mouth, starving himself and parching himself with thirst,

4. Cf. 1 Cor. 8:8.

until he had put carnal desire to death in himself. During intense thirst he poured himself water, set it before himself, and, looking at it, said:

"How sweet this water is!"

Then, taking a little water into his mouth, he tasted it with his tongue and poured it out upon the ground. The demon could not endure such patience of the blessed one and cried out loudly:

"Thou hast overcome me, Niphon!"

But the holy Niphon, ascribing the victory over the demons to the power and help of God and not to his own ascetic labors and abstinence, answered him:

"It is not I who overcome thee, but the power of our God, who guards His servants."

God permitted temptation to come upon Niphon, so that, tested like gold in the furnace, he might prove worthy of the grace of the Lord. The temptation consisted in the disordering of his mind, and by diabolical delusion it lasted four years. Once Niphon stood in prayer from evening until morning, and suddenly he heard a terrible noise rushing from right to left. The saint was alarmed and wondered what this noise could be, and at once the devil appeared with a loud roar and fury, and struck such fear into the saint that his mind was darkened. Scarcely recovering himself, he wished to pray and to make the sign of the Cross, when the devil attacked him, saying:

"Leave off prayer, and then I will not struggle with thee!"

But the blessed one answered:

"I will by no means obey thee, unclean spirit. If God has commanded thee to destroy me, I accept it with thanksgiving; but if not, then soon, with the help of God, I shall overcome thee!"

To this the devil said:

"Thou art mistaken, Niphon. There is no God, for where is He?" So the demon constantly spoke to him, corrupting and darkening his mind. But the saint answered him:

"Thou speakest like a madman, devil, for 'the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God' (Ps. 13:1)."

He wished to pray but could not: he uttered the words, but his mind would not obey him. The saint grieved bitterly, his mind clouded; from

then on he lost his reason and suffered. And when he came somewhat to himself, the demon again, ceasing not, said to him, "There is no God"; but the saint answered:

"Even if I fall into fornication, even if I kill, even if I commit some other sin, yet I will not turn away from my Christ."

And the devil again said to him:

"What dost thou say: is there a Christ? There is no Christ. I alone possess everything and reign over all. Who told thee that there is a God or a Christ?"

"Thou wilt not beguile me, dark power!" answered the saint. "Depart from me, enemy of all truth!"

But the devil did not withdraw, and went on struggling with him, darkening his mind and compelling him to say, "There is no God." Thus for four years the saint struggled with the demon and compelled himself to prayer. Once, during prayer, doubting whether there was a God, he looked at the icon of the Savior, and, sighing from the depth of his heart, stretched out his hands toward the icon, saying:

"O God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?[5] Grant me to know that Thou art God and that there is none other beside Thee, that I may not incline to the enemy's counsel."

With these words he saw that the Face of Christ on the icon shone like the sun, and at the same time he smelled an indescribable fragrance. In terror he fell to the ground, saying:

"Forgive me, O Master, that I tempted Thee by doubting Thee, my God. Now I believe that Thou art the one God and Creator of all creation."

Lying on the ground, he turned his head and looked at the image of the Savior, and he saw a miracle: the image of the Lord moved its eyes and eyebrows, as if it were a living man. Niphon exclaimed:

"Blessed is my God, and blessed is His glorious name, now and forever. Amen!"

5. The expression of Ps. 21:1.

From that time the grace of God descended upon Niphon, for his four years of trial had now passed. After this he always had a cheerful and bright face, so that some were perplexed and said:

"What does this mean? For so many years he walked gloomy, and now he rejoices and is cheerful?"

The saint, however, acquired courage against the demons, mocking them. He said:

"Where are those who maintained that there is no God?" And he overcame them by constant prayer. Reflecting on his former sins, he said to himself:

"Come, sinful Niphon, let us go into the church and confess our sins to the Lord. There the generous Father awaits us."

And he went into the church. Approaching the church doors, Niphon raised his hands on high and, with bitter lamentation, cried out:

"Receive me, Lord Jesus Christ, my God, who am dead in soul and mind. Receive a foul-mouthed sinner, defiled in soul and body, and turn not away Thy face. Do not say, O Master, 'I do not know who thou art.' But hearken to the voice of my supplication and save me, for Thou dost not desire the death of sinners, and I will not depart from Thee until Thou hearest me and grantest forgiveness for my transgressions."

During this prayer, suddenly a loud sound was heard from heaven, and the saint saw in ecstasy the face of a radiant man appearing in a cloud. His outstretched hands were visible, with which he embraced the blessed one, as once the father of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:20), and kissed him on the neck, saying:

"Well hast thou done in coming here, My grieving child! I have sorrowed and mourned greatly over thee, and My heart burned in expectation of when thou wouldst turn to Me, whether in the evening or in the morning. Now I rejoice, now I am glad, seeing that thou hast turned to Me with all thy heart."

Niphon later related this to his disciple, and while telling it he wept greatly. After this, when he prayed again, an Angel of God appeared with a cup full of myrrh, which he poured upon his head, and the place was filled with fragrance. Likewise, when he struck his body and inflic-

ted wounds upon himself, the Angel came down and censed around him, spreading fragrance in that place.

The spiritual eyes of the blessed Niphon were so enlightened that he knew the secrets of human hearts. He conversed openly with the Angels as with friends, and he plainly saw the demons. Once, on the way from the church of St. Anastasia to his hut, he saw at the gate of the house of a harlot an Angel in the form of a youth, weeping bitterly, and he asked him the cause of his tears. The Angel answered:

"I have been entrusted by God to guard a man who now sleeps in this house with a harlot, and by this he cruelly offends me. I cannot bear to see the lawlessness he commits, and how can I help weeping when I see into what darkness the image of God has sunk?"

The blessed one said to him:

"Why then dost thou not punish him, so that he may desist from sin?"

"I have no power," answered the Angel, "to draw near to him, since, from the time he began to sin, he has been a slave of the demons, and I have no authority over him. For God created man with free will and showed him the narrow way and the broad, that he might walk by whichever he chooses."

Then St. Niphon said to his disciple:

"There is nothing more abominable than the sin of fornication. Yet if a fornicator repents, God will receive him sooner than other lawbreakers, for this sin arises from nature itself, through the suggestion of the devil; and this passion is cast out by fervent prayer, strict fasting, and various mortifications of the body."

The saint also saw how the demons walk among the people and tempt men, suggesting to them condemnation, slander, quarrels, and various sorrows. Once he saw a man at his work, and a demon came to him and began whispering in his ear. Not far off another man was working, and a demon came to him too and whispered in his ear; then they, leaving their work, began to quarrel. The Blessed One rose and said:

"O demonic snare! How you sow enmity among men!"

Once the demon of vainglory attacked him and said:

"Now you will work signs, and your name will be glorified throughout the whole earth, for you have pleased God."

But the Blessed One said to that demon:

"Wait, and I will work a sign for you."

And finding a stone before him, he said:

"I say to you, stone, go from here and move to another place."

But the stone lay motionless. Then the saint said to the demon:

"There is your gift, devil!"

And he spat in his face; then he prayed, and the devil at once disappeared. On another occasion Niphon saw a churchman, behind whom a demon walked, suggesting to him foul and blasphemous thoughts. The man, feeling the snares of the demons upon him, often turned around and spat at the demon. The Blessed One said to the evil spirit:

"Cease, devil, from troubling the servants of God! What profit do you gain from this soul going to perdition?"

The demon answered:

"We gain no profit from it, but we have an order from our king and the princes who rule over us to struggle against men. If the princes learn that we do not struggle against men, they beat us cruelly."

Once more the Blessed One saw a monk walking and whispering a prayer, and from his mouth there flew a fiery flame that reached up to heaven; with him walked his Guardian Angel, holding a fiery spear, with which he drove the demons away from that monk. On the eve of the feast of the Resurrection of Christ, on the evening of Holy Saturday, Niphon stood in church with the people and saw the Most Pure Theotokos with the apostles and a multitude of saints, who had come into the church and looked upon those present with a mother's love. If She saw any of them concerned for their salvation, She rejoiced greatly; but looking upon the negligent, She shook Her head and wept, yet, stretching out Her hands, She prayed to God for all, that all might receive salvation. Seeing this, the Venerable One rejoiced beyond words that the Most Pure Theotokos does not abandon Christians but constantly helps them, and that She was also his own helper and protectress.

Once, while Niphon was asleep, the devil suddenly appeared with a weapon in his hand and rushed at him, intending to kill him; but, restrained by the power of God, he could do nothing evil to the saint, and he ran away, gnashing his teeth and saying:

"O Mary! You always drive me away from this man, who is cruel to me!"

The Venerable One had the gift of instructing and comforting the sorrowing with his words. A brother came to the saint in sorrow and asked:

"What shall I do, Father? The evil demons greatly trouble me: whether I eat, or drink, or stand in prayer, they suggest to my heart now heresies, now grievous blasphemies against my Lord Jesus Christ and His Most Pure Mother, and against the holy icons. I fear that one day fire will come down from heaven and burn me alive."

The saint answered him:

"Receive my counsel, brother. When the sea is stirred, it raises waves and dashes them against the rocks; the waves then return to the sea. So evil thoughts sent by the devil act upon the human soul; and if a man listens to his counsel and follows him, he perishes, as many have perished by yielding to him. But if anyone, in the struggle against evil thoughts, does not give way but takes courage all the more and resists them, despising the devil, then the devil's malice returns upon himself, and that man receives a reward from God. And you, child, endure and resist the devil by prayer and fasting, and he will soon flee from you. Beware of slander and anger; these above all provoke blasphemies."

Thus, having instructed the brother, he dismissed him in peace. Nor was the Venerable One deprived of the gift of healing diseases. A certain woman came to him with a toothache and entreated the saint to heal her. He said to her:

"We are sinful and unclean men, and we cannot heal you, unless God Himself has mercy upon you."

With these words Niphon went into the church, prayed, and, taking oil from the lamp before the icon of the Most Pure Theotokos, anointed the woman's face over all the swelling; at once the pain ceased, and the woman, healed, went away glorifying God. He also healed another wo-

man, who had earlier brought him food, when she became ill and was near death; by his prayer she became well. With his prophetic eyes he also saw human souls as they departed from the body. Once, standing in prayer in the church of St. Anastasia, he raised his eyes to heaven and saw the heavens opened and many Angels, some of whom descended to earth, while others ascended, bearing human souls to heaven. And he saw two Angels going up and carrying a certain soul. When they approached the toll-house of fornication, the demon toll-collectors came out and said in anger:

"This is our soul. How dare you carry it past us?"

The Angels answered:

"What sign do you have upon it, that you claim it as your own?"

The demons said:

"She defiled herself with sins until death, not only natural but even unnatural; besides, she condemned her neighbor, and she died without repentance. What do you say to that?"

"We do not believe you," answered the Angels, "nor your father the devil, until we ask the Guardian Angel of this soul."

When they asked him, he said:

"It is true that this soul sinned much, but when she fell ill she began to weep and to confess her sins to God; and if God has forgiven her, He knows why: He has the power. Glory to His righteous judgment!"

Then the Angels, having put the demons to shame, entered with the soul through the gates of heaven.

Then the Blessed One saw that the Angels were carrying yet another soul, and the demons ran out to them, crying:

"What are you doing, carrying souls without knowing them? For example, this one, covetous, spiteful, who committed robbery!"

The Angels answered:

"We know well that, although she did all this, she wept and grieved, confessed her sins, and gave alms; for this God has forgiven her."

But the demons began to say:

"If this soul is already worthy of God's mercy, then take and carry the sinners from the whole world! Why should we trouble ourselves!"

To this the Angels answered:

"All sinners who confess their sins with humility and tears will receive forgiveness by the mercy of God; but those who die without repentance, God judges."

Thus, having put the evil spirits to shame, the Angels passed by. The saint also saw the soul of a certain God-loving man being carried. He was chaste and merciful, and loved everyone. The demons, seeing it from afar, gnashed their teeth, while the Angels of God came out to meet it from the gates of heaven and greeted that soul thus:

"Glory to Thee, Christ our God, that Thou hast not left her in the hands of her enemies, but hast delivered her from the nether hell."

After some time the Blessed Niphon saw the demons dragging a soul into hell. It was the soul of a slave whom his master wearied with hunger and beat; unable to endure such torment, and by the urging of a demon, he took a rope and hanged himself. His Guardian Angel walked at a distance and wept bitterly, while the demons rejoiced. The weeping Angel was commanded by God to go to the city of Rome and to guard a newborn infant who was being baptized there at that time. The Venerable One also saw another soul, which Angels were carrying through the air, and hosts of demons met them; before they had reached the fourth toll-house, the demons snatched that soul from the hands of the holy Angels and cast it with mockery into the abyss. It was the soul of a clergyman of the church of St. Eleutherius; this clergyman had constantly provoked God with fornication, sorcery, and robbery, and he died suddenly without repentance, and there was joy among the demons.

The Venerable One built a church in Constantinople in the name of the Most Pure Theotokos, lived beside it, and converted many unbelievers to the Christian faith. The devil could not endure that Niphon had turned many away from demonic snares; and he came to him with a multitude of demons, about a thousand, who attacked the saint by night and wished to torment him; his whole dwelling was full of demons. But he, by the power of the Cross, forbade them, and with the help of God and the aid of his holy Angel, took each of them one by one, giving them a thousand blows each, until they swore to him that they would not approach even the place where the name of Niphon is pronounced.

Once, conversing with the brethren about the benefit of the soul, Niphon recalled the following.

"There was, he relates, in this city a slave of a certain nobleman, named Basil, a tailor by trade, of an evil disposition, foul-mouthed, disobedient, and a buffoon. He spent all his time in games and in impure carnal sins with adulterers, and would not listen to the admonitions of his master. But by the wondrous Providence of the merciful Lord he received salvation in the following way: by the permission of God, on account of men's sins, a great famine came, and masters began to drive their slaves away from them for lack of food; Basil's master also drove him out. Basil departed, and on the very first day he sold his clothing in order to get food for himself; then he began to go about naked and beg alms. It was winter, and he froze and shook with the cold. At last, exhausted, he lay down in a certain street, and after some time his toes rotted away, and then the feet themselves. Basil endured it all, considering it a punishment for his sins, and said nothing except: 'Glory to God for all!' Thus he lay for two months in the street, without shelter, weeping and wailing over his sins. By chance a certain lover of Christ, named Nicephorus, passed along that road. Seeing the sufferer Basil, he ordered his slaves to carry him into his house, where he lovingly comforted him, made his bed with his own hands, and fed him. Two weeks later, on a Saturday, the sick Basil began to speak:

'Your coming is joyful to me, holy Angels. Rest a little, and let us go.'

They said:

'No, go quickly, for the Lord is calling you.'

'Wait a little,' Basil answered, 'until I repay my debt. I borrowed ten coins from a friend of mine and have not returned them until now; otherwise the devil may detain me in the air on account of this.'

And the Angels waited while Basil, gathering the ten coins, sent them to the one to whom he owed them; and then he gave up his spirit to God.

'You see, children,' Niphon concluded his account, 'what the judgments of God are, and how, by His will, He saves the sinner.'"

Once the blessed one came with his disciple to pray in a church adjoining the so-called palaces of Aponius, where the hierarch was celebrating the Divine Service. And the spiritual eyes of the saint were opened, and he saw fire come down from heaven and cover the sanctuary and the archpastor. During the singing of the Trisagion, four Angels appeared and sang together with the chanters. When the Apostolic Epistle was read, he saw the holy Apostle Paul standing behind the reader and watching him; and when the Gospel was read, the words rose up to heaven like lamps. During the transfer of the gifts the church veil was opened and heaven was revealed, and a wondrous fragrance was perceived. Then Angels began to descend, singing: "Glory to Christ God!" They brought a beautiful youth and set him on the diskos,[6] while they themselves surrounded the Holy Table and ministered to the honorable gifts; two Seraphim and two Cherubim, hovering above his head, covered him with their wings. When the time came for the consecration of the gifts and the accomplishment of the awesome mystery, one of the most radiant Angels drew near, took a knife, and slew the youth; he let the blood flow into the holy chalice, and, laying the youth on the diskos, he himself returned with reverence to his place. Then the Communion of the Divine Mysteries began, and the blessed one saw that the faces of some of those communing were bright as the sun, while those of others were dark and gloomy, like those of Ethiopians. The Angels standing there watched as each approached, and they crowned those who communed worthily, but they turned away from the unworthy and loathed them. At the end of the holy service he saw that the youth had suddenly become whole again, in the arms of the Angels, and that he ascended into heaven. The Venerable one him-

6. The diskos (Greek: a dish, plate) is the dish on which the Lamb is placed, that is, the part of the prosphora which at the Liturgy, after the invocation of the Holy Spirit, is transformed into the true Body of Christ. During the proskomedia, when the Lamb is removed from the prosphora and placed on the diskos, the Nativity of the Lord is commemorated, and the diskos signifies the manger in which the infant Jesus was laid. For this reason the diskos sometimes depicts the infant God-man lying in the manger. But at the same time, during the proskomedia, when the Lamb is cut on the diskos, and after the transfer of the gifts from the table of oblation to the holy table, the suffering of the Lord on the cross, His death, and His placing in the tomb are commemorated, and the diskos signifies Golgotha and the Savior's tomb.

self later related this to his disciple, who wrote it down for the benefit of many.

Once the saint, going to the church of the Most Holy Theotokos which he had built himself, saw an Ethiopian walking along the road, very sorrowful; this was a demonic prince, and other demons followed him. When they came nearer and heard the church singing, the lesser demons began to revile their prince, saying:

'Look how the name of Jesus is glorified by those whom we once held in our power! Where is our strength? It has been overcome, and our kingdom has been destroyed.' Thus the demons reproached their prince, and he said to them:

'Do not grieve, do not despair. I shall soon bring it about that the Christians will abandon Jesus and will glorify us.'

They went on a little and met thirty men. The demonic prince approached one of them and whispered in his ear, and the man became confused in his mind, began to speak shamelessly, to laugh, and to sing indecent songs. Then they met a musician who was walking along and playing. The blessed one saw an Ethiopian binding them all with one rope and dragging them behind the musician; all of them went after him dancing, and many people joined them. They went on, dancing and singing obscene songs, for the demons were dragging them, having hooked them by the heart. A certain rich man, looking from his house, gave the musician a copper coin so that they might dance before him. When the musician put the coin in his pocket, the demons took it and sent it to hell to their father Satan, saying to him:

'Rejoice, our father! Alazion, our prince, has sent you a sacrifice which our enemies, the Christians, have brought, giving copper money for games.'

Taking it, Satan rejoiced and said:

'Strive, children, that our sacrifice may grow, and overcome the Christians.'

And then he returned the coin to the musician's pocket again. The blessed Niphon, seeing this with his spiritual eyes, said with grief:

'Woe to those who offer sacrifice to the demons through games!'

And he admonished his listeners to beware of foul and disorderly games, since they are from the devil. Once, after prayer, the saint was in a state of spiritual rapture and saw a vast field of equal length and breadth, and on it stood a multitude of Ethiopians divided into regiments; the regiments numbered three hundred and sixty-five, according to the number of grave sins. One very dark Ethiopian was counting the warriors and arranging the regiments as if for battle, and he said:

'Look at me and fear nothing: my strength will be with you!'

Several demons brought a great quantity of various weapons and distributed them among the regiments. Then the devil gave each regiment power of sorcery and enchantment, and sent them throughout the whole earth against the Church of Christ. As the blessed Niphon looked on this, he suddenly heard a voice:

'Turn, Niphon, to the east, and look.'

He turned and saw a pure and fair-looking field, and on it stood an even greater number than the Ethiopians—innumerable hosts, hundreds of thousands of warriors in white garments, all armed as for battle. Then a man brighter than the sun appeared and said:

'Thus commands the Lord of Sabaoth: go throughout all the earth, help the Christians, and guard their lives.'

Seeing this, the Venerable One glorified God, who helps His Church.

The Venerable Niphon was already approaching old age. The time had come for him to receive the episcopal dignity, which had been foretold to him by God in the following vision. He saw a field filled with a great multitude of sheep, but they had no shepherd. The blessed one thought:

'What then, are these sheep without a shepherd not afraid of the wolf?' At once there appeared a man of saintly mien, like the holy Apostle Paul, and said:

'Why do you stand idle and look at the royal sheep? Why do you not pasture them?'

The blessed Niphon answered:

'Shall I pasture the royal sheep? I am unacquainted with this work and very weak.'

And the one who appeared said:

'The King bids you pasture them only for a short time, and then, when you have departed, you will receive a great reward.'

With these words he gave him a staff, entrusted the sheep and the fold to him, and went away. Coming to himself, the blessed one thought: "What does this mean?" and understood that the man who had appeared to him was the holy Apostle Paul, the sheep were people, and the fold was the Church. He was greatly afraid lest they should make him bishop in the royal city.[7] And Nifont said to himself: "Did I pray to God so that I should not have authority over anyone? And now He wants to give me authority! I will act as the prophet Jonah did (Jon. 2) and flee from here!" Taking his disciple, he left his cell and boarded a ship. With a gentle wind the ship quickly reached Alexandria, where at that time Alexander was patriarch,[8] who governed the Church after Peter, who suffered for Christ under Diocletian. On that same day there came inhabitants of the city of Constantia from the island of Cyprus, asking Patriarch Alexander to appoint them a bishop, whomever he should find worthy, for their pastor, named Christopher, a holy and honorable man, had died. The patriarch said to them:

'Wait a little, until God shows me such a man.'

That same night the patriarch saw the holy Apostle Paul, who asked him:

'Whom will you appoint bishop of the city of Constantia?'

The patriarch answered:

'I do not know; whomever God wills.'

The one who appeared said:

'God will show you a worthy man. Only be in the church tomorrow with all the clergy, and look at those who enter; and whomever you see who is in every way like me, to him entrust the flock.'

In the morning the patriarch sat in the church and watched to see which of those entering would resemble the one who had appeared. Nifont, knowing nothing of this, went to the church and said to his disciple on the way:

7. That is, in Constantinople.

8. St. Alexander was patriarch in Alexandria from 312 to 326; his memory is celebrated May 29.

'I feel in my heart a certain sadness and joy. Will something not happen to us!'

With these words he entered the church. Seeing him, the patriarch said to his archdeacon:

'Look, Athanasius, does this man not resemble in face the image of the holy Apostle Paul?'

'Yes, Father,' the archdeacon answered, 'truly so, and he is worthy to shepherd the Church of Christ. I see that an Angel of God is walking with him and conversing; moreover, a crown of precious stones is visible upon his head.'

Then the patriarch called the saint over, greeted him, and they sat down. The archdeacon said to Nifont with a smile:

"Why did you flee, Father, only to come now against your own will?"

When the Blessed One learned what would befall him, he said with a sigh:

"Woe is me! I am a sinner and unworthy to receive such authority!"

The Patriarch answered:

"Oh, if only I were as unworthy as you!"

With these words he rose, began the Divine Liturgy, and ordained Venerable Nifont to the rank of cleric; then over several days he ordained him deacon and presbyter, and afterward raised him to the episcopal dignity, to the general joy over such a shepherd revealed by God. After his consecration as bishop, Nifont remained in Alexandria for three days, conversing with the holy men who were there. Afterward the Patriarch sent Nifont to his see, dispatching with him, to do him honor, his archdeacon and other holy men. They arrived at the Cypriot city of Constantia on the fourth of September; having entrusted him with his flock, those sent with him returned to Alexandria, glorifying God. The Hierarch of God, Nifont, began diligently to tend the flock of Christ and to care for the salvation of the faithful. He was a father to orphans and widows, a free physician to the sick and a benefactor to the infirm, and he worked various miracles, too many to be written down, and for this he was greatly loved and honored by all. Tirelessly caring for his flock, he once saw a great Ethiopian leaning on a staff, as

though in sorrow, walking toward the city and often resting along the way. The saint understood that this was the devil, and he cried out to him:

"I speak to you, foul one: why and how did you dare to come here?"

The Ethiopian looked at him with anger, as though he wished to devour him, and said:

"I heard that you were here, and I came to crush you together with your sheep."

The saint said to him:

"Weakling! You yourself are crushed, and do you wish to crush me? I saw a certain ascetic wrestling with you, and thirty of your demons grew faint in the struggle with him. Who would not laugh at your feebleness!"

"Do not be surprised at this," said the devil. "If I had my former strength, it would cost me nothing to crush you, but since Jesus was crucified, I am truly weak."

The saint answered:

"And now, if I pray to my Christ, what will become of you, shameless one?"

"I know," the devil answered, "that you can do much. But do me no harm; I will leave your city and never approach it again."

Seeing this, the Hierarch gave thanks to God, who keeps him and protects his flock from the evil demon.

After a short administration of the Church of Christ, Saint Nifont drew near the time of his repose, which he foreknew three days in advance. Then there came to him the great Athanasius, who had formerly been archdeacon and afterward, upon the death of Alexander, had occupied the throne of the Alexandrian Church.[9] He had been informed by God in advance of Nifont's approaching death, and he therefore came with all his clergy to take a last farewell of the man of God. Nifont, seeing Athanasius, asked him:

9. St. Athanasius the Great, patriarch of Alexandria from 326; this great hierarch was a zealous defender of Orthodoxy against the heretical Arians. St. Athanasius left many writings, which represent an everlasting monument to the invincibility of Orthodoxy against all enemies. He died in 373. The Church celebrates his memory January 18.

"Why did you trouble yourself, blessed Father, to come to me, a sinful man?"

"I learned," Athanasius answered, "that you are departing tomorrow for the heavenly Jerusalem, and I came to converse with you. I beg you, when you stand before the throne of God, remember me there too, so that I may also receive the mercy of the Lord."

"And you, Father," said the saint, "when you celebrate the Divine services, remember my unworthiness also."

On that same night Saint Nifont prayed for a long time for himself and for his flock. And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him with consolation and the tidings that eternal rest was prepared for him. During the morning chanting he began to suffer greatly from a bodily illness, and therefore he said to his disciple:

"Child, spread a mat for me on the ground."

When the disciple carried out his command, Nifont lay down upon it, quite ill. At the coming of day, Athanasius the Great came to him, and sitting beside him, asked:

"Father, is there any benefit to a man from illness, or not?"

The saint replied:

"As gold, when it is burned in the fire, sheds its rust, so a man, when he is ill, is cleansed of his sins."

Then, after being silent a little while, he wept, and then smiled, and his face grew bright, and he said:

"I greet you, holy Angels!"

A little later he said:

"Rejoice, holy martyrs!" And his face grew brighter still. After some time he said again:

"Grace be to you, blessed prophets!"

Then the spiritual eyes of Saint Athanasius were opened, and he saw that all the choirs of the saints were greeting the Blessed One, each one separately. Then Nifont said joyfully:

"I greet you, priests, venerable ones, and all you saints!" And he fell silent. Soon he cried out:

"Rejoice, Joyful One, my bright light, my help and my strength! I glorify You, O Good One, for I remember Your mercy and Your grace!"

After this he fell silent, and his face shone like the sun, so that all those present were struck with awe. A fragrant sweetness was also perceived, and soon a voice was heard from heaven calling him to eternal rest. Thus on the twenty-third day of December he committed his honorable and holy soul into the hands of God. Weeping and bitter lamentation were throughout the whole city, and they buried Saint Nifont with honor in the great church of the holy Apostles, glorifying the merciful to sinners, the wondrous in his saints, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

* * *

Suffering of the Ten Holy Martyrs of Crete

Страдание святых десяти мучеников Критских

Decius, Roman emperor, appointed as governor of the island of Crete[10] a man named Decius, who bore his emperor's name and resembled him in cruelty, torment, and persecution of Christians. Upon arriving on the island of Crete, Decius at once gave orders to seek out all who believed in Christ and to bring them before him for torture. And they began to bring to him Christians steadfast in the faith, and after many tortures and sufferings they delivered them to various kinds of death. At this time ten most renowned men were seized and brought before the tormentor. They were from different cities: from the city of Gorgina[11], Theodulus, Saturninus, Euporus, Gelasius, and Eunicianus; from Kios, Zoticus; from Epinei, Pompius and Agathopus; from Kydonia, Basilides; from Heraclea, Evarestus[12]. All of them alike strove for the eternal heavenly blessedness. They stood before the tormentor, and what bold words they spoke, what

10. The island of Crete (otherwise Candia) lies in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea. Because of its vastness and fertility it was formerly called the "queen of the islands" of the Mediterranean. Christianity began here already in apostolic times; the first beginnings of it were laid by eyewitnesses of the event of the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, for Cretans were also present at it (Acts 2:11). Afterwards it was established and spread here by the Apostle Paul.

11. Gortyna, or Gortin, was in antiquity a considerable city on the island of Crete, by the river Lethaeus (now Yeropotamos). The ruins of the ancient city have survived to this day.

12. Kios, Epineus, Cydonia and Heraclea are various cities on the island of Crete.

courage they showed, what torments they endured, what sufferings they overcame by their patience! They were beaten, tormented, dragged along the ground, struck with stones, mocked and spat upon; thus for thirty days they endured every manner of abuse. On the twenty-eighth of December a trial was appointed, and when the governor took his seat, the sufferers, full of valor and courage, were brought to the final judgment. The governor, in mad fury, longed to destroy the holy martyrs with cruel hands, while they were ready to endure to their last breath. With anger the murderous governor looked at them and said:

"What madmen you are! Neither reason nor time has taught you what is profitable!"

Then, as though already frightening them with his very anger, he added:

"Offer sacrifice! And if you do not, I will say nothing more to you, and you will learn what Decius is, whom you refuse to obey!"

To this the martyrs answered:

"Governor! By word and by deed we have for a long time now shown you sufficiently that we will neither offer sacrifice to your gods nor submit to your command."

The governor, interrupting their speech, said:

"So you do not care at all about torments, impious men?"

"We are not afraid of torments at all," the saints answered. "We are even very grateful to you, for you have prepared for us such a spiritual triumph, that is, torment for Christ, and have offered it to us."

The governor said:

"It will not go so easily for you. You will learn the power of the great gods, whom you shamelessly revile, not ashamed before the many wise men present, who honor the first of the gods, Zeus, as well as Hera, Rhea, and others.[13] Now you will be subjected to such torments that not only will your courage vanish, but others like you, unbending if any such can be found, will be afraid."

To this the men steadfast in soul again answered:

"Do not speak to us, governor, of Zeus and his mother Rhea! This is no news to us: we know, and have heard from our fathers, of his origin,

life, and manners. He was so intemperate and so impious that he committed adultery not only with women but also with men; by sorcery and magical cunning he changed his true appearance and took another, always for greater and greater adultery, and constantly defiled himself with shameful deeds. Some, seized by the same passion, imitated his abominations—for what is easier than to imitate evil?—they proclaimed him a god, built temples, began to offer sacrifices to him, so that what they themselves desired might seem pleasing even to God, so that debauchery and an intemperate life would not only not be deemed hateful to God but, alas, would be acknowledged as pleasing to God."

So spoke the servants of God; and the hegemon was tormented with anger, feeling that they were right. The people raged still more, rushing at the martyrs and would have torn them apart with their hands, had not Decius, by voice and by a motion of his hand, stopped the tumult and the outcry among the people. Having restored silence, he began to consider what cruel death to devise for the martyrs. And at once, by the hegemon's order, the torturers seized the saints for punishment and began to subject them to various tortures, equal in cruelty and in torment. One of them was hung up and scraped with iron claws: the sinews were torn out, and pieces of his body fell to the ground. Others were beaten with stones and sharp stakes on the ribs down to the bones; in others the joints were broken by heavy blows of lead, and the bones were shattered and crushed. Each was tormented in a different way. To hear of such cruelty of torments is painful, as it is unbearable for the merciful to look upon these sufferings, and it is hard even to hear them enumerated in detail. But the martyrs bore these torments in complete calm, or, to speak more rightly, endured them with joy, and to those standing about it seemed that they were not so much suffering from pain as lamenting the insufficiency of the torments and wishing for even greater ones. All came running to look at them as at something new and wonderful: both the faithful and the unbelievers. The faithful, who kept their faith in secret, hastened to marvel at the courage of the sufferers and thereby to be strengthened in the faith; while the unbe-

13. On Dios or Zeus, Hera and Rhea see note 1, on p. 989.

lievers hastened to mock the patience of the saints and, looking upon their terrible torment, to take pleasure in their pains. In doing so, they not only showed not the slightest pity, but urged the hegemon and the torturers to still greater cruelty. Urged on by them, the hegemon gave orders, and the torturers carried them out; and meanwhile the herald cried out:

"Spare yourselves, submit to the magistrates, offer sacrifice to the gods."

But the martyrs, amid such cruel sufferings, surpassed all in their courage and endurance: the people, the herald, the torturers, the hegemon himself, and above all their prince, Satan, and all his power. All the martyrs, as if by agreement among themselves, cried out:

"We are Christians, a sacrifice of Christ, slain for Christ; and if we must die ten thousand times, we will gladly die!"

When the holy martyrs had disregarded all the torments, then the zealous servant of Satan, Decius, despairing of the possibility of persuading them and compelling them to offer sacrifice, pronounced the sentence of death upon them. The saints were led to beheading by the sword to a place not far from the city, which the inhabitants of that country called Alonius. On the way to it the sufferers showed something new and extraordinary: throughout the torment they had been of one mind and one accord, but at the end they began to dispute only about which of them should go first under the sword and receive the crown earlier. But this dispute was ended by Theodulus, one of these holy martyrs, who said that he would be first who, after all the rest, would place his head under the sword: if, seeing before him the beheading and death of all his other friends, he should not fear in the least, should show no grief, and not even change in countenance, then he would indeed prove to be the most glorious ascetic and victor. All agreed with the words of Theodulus. First of all they sang a common song to God:

"Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us as prey to their teeth! Our soul has escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers" (Ps. 123:6–7). Then, coming to the appointed place, each of them uttered the following prayer:

"Forgive, O Lord, Thy servants, and receive the shedding of our blood for us and for our kinsmen and friends, and for the whole fatherland; let them be freed from the darkness of ignorance and with bright eyes behold the Christian faith, and know Thee, the True Light, the Eternal King!"

After their prayer, the holy and victorious heads were cut off one after another, and their souls joyfully ascended to Christ God. After their beheading, when the torturers had gone, some of the Christians who remained on that spot gathered the holy bodies of the martyrs and buried them with honor.[14]

At the end of the persecution, when piety shone forth again, the blessed Paul, bishop of the city of Gortyna, arriving in Constantinople, obtained permission to transfer the bodies of the saints from the place of Alonius, where they had been buried after their beheading by the sword, to Gortyna. Returning to Crete and arriving at the place of Alonius with a multitude of Christians, some of whom had been present at the sufferings of the saints, and clearing away the earth lying upon them, he found their bodies as if in moisture, preserved by the will of God uncorrupted and whole, and transferred them with glory, for the protection of the city and for the help of all who stood in need of it. By their prayers may we too be made partakers of the heavenly blessings prepared for them, by the grace and loving-kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory and honor forever. Amen.

Kontakion, Tone 4:

The honorable suffering of the martyrs has risen as the Morning Star, fore-illumining for us Him who is born in the cave, Whom the Virgin bore without seed.

* * *

Memory of St. Paul, Bishop of Neocaesarea

Память святого Павла, епископа Неокесарийского

14. This was in the middle of the 2nd century.

Our holy father Paul, being Bishop of Neocaesarea,[15] became so renowned for his virtues that his wondrous name became known to Licinius,[16] who then reigned in Nicomedia. Licinius, who had begun a cruel persecution against the Christians, demanded that Paul be brought before him. And when those sent presented the saint for judgment by the emperor, they first sought to act upon him with threats and wearied him with hunger, and then began to beat him. All this the saint bore with courage, and all marveled at his patience. After that they subjected him to yet another torture: a red-hot iron hoop, emitting fiery sparks, the smith with tongs laid upon the saint's palm, and covering this hoop with his other palm, and binding both his hands with clamps, held them until the iron cooled. From this the muscles of the saint's hands were twisted and deadened, so that his fingers could no longer either bend or straighten. Then they bound the Venerable Father, carried him to the banks of the river Euphrates, and there shut him in a prison.

When the Emperor Constantine the Great, leaving Rome, finally became established in the East, and in an edict on this occasion expressed the wish that all his subjects be Christians, then freedom was granted to all who had been in exile and imprisonment for the name of Christ, and each returned to his homeland. At that time our holy father Paul, likewise released to freedom, took up his episcopal throne again and shone forth with piety, as before, when he had still been a hermit, taking part, along with the other 318 holy fathers, at the First Ecumenical Council held in Nicaea.[17] St. Paul was there one of those who bore on their bodies the wounds[18] of the Lord Jesus: among the fathers present

15. Blessed Theodoret names Paul bishop of Neocaesarea, a fortress lying on the banks of the Euphrates.

16. Licinius reigned from 307 to 324 in the eastern half of the Roman Empire, first as co-ruler with the emperor Galerius and afterwards independently. While Constantine the Great became emperor in the west, Licinius, a pagan, at first treated the Christians almost favorably; but when Constantine openly declared himself the patron of Christianity, Licinius became a furious persecutor of the Church of Christ, suspecting Constantine of intending to seize the east as well, and suspecting his Christian subjects of sympathy for Constantine and a desire to submit to him.

17. In 325.

18. After the example of the Apostle Paul, who in his Epistle to the Galatians (Gal. 6:17) exclaims: "For I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

at the council some were deprived of hands, some of ears, some of noses, others of eyes, or had some other injury upon their bodies; some for Christ had endured beatings, the breaking of bones, the tearing of joints, others had endured the burning of fire and the scraping of their bodily members. Among them the blessed Paul appeared as a noble sufferer for the faith of Christ, since he too bore the marks of blows from rods, and his holy hands, burned, were shriveled and did not function. The council was convened against the impious heretic Arius, who by divine judgment had then been given over to anathema. After the council the fathers presented themselves to the emperor. The blessed Emperor Constantine on this occasion took the hands of the blessed Paul and, kissing them and pressing them to his eyes and other members of his body, exclaimed:

"Great is our joy to greet one who has suffered so much for Christ our God, and to kiss these burned hands, now powerless."

The blessed Paul then returned to his city, to the episcopal throne, and, having governed his flock in peace for many years, departed to the Lord.

* * *

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 24

24 декабря

New Calendar December 24 · Old Calendar January 6 (civil dates)

Life and Martyrdom of the Holy Venerable-Martyr Eugenia

Житие и страдание святой преподобномученицы Евгении

In the seventh year of the reign of the Roman emperor Commodus, who succeeded to the throne after his father Marcus Aurelius[1], a certain famous nobleman named Philip was appointed governor of all Egypt. Having received this appointment, Philip moved from Rome to Alexandria with his wife Claudia and their children. He had two sons, Avitus and Sergius, and one daughter, Eugenia, beautiful of face and chaste in spirit, whose life is the subject of the present narrative.

Philip governed Egypt according to Roman law and the customs of his forefathers. He greatly disliked sorcerers and magicians and pursued them in every way. He also disliked the Jews, to such a degree that he could not bear to hear the Jewish name. He was most lenient toward the Christians, and although by imperial command he had expelled them from Alexandria, he nevertheless permitted them to settle peacefully and serve their God in the suburbs of that city. Philip respected the Christians for the purity of their lives and for their wisdom. He himself gladly devoted himself to Greek philosophy, and in it he also educated his daughter Eugenia, desiring that she acquire a good knowledge of philosophy. Besides this, Philip taught Eugenia to speak Latin and Greek freely and elegantly. Possessing a clear mind and diligence, Eugenia advanced easily in her studies. Whatever she once heard or read she always remembered firmly, keeping it in her heart as though it

1. Marcus Aurelius, Roman emperor, reigned from 161 to 180 A.D. Commodus, his son, reigned from 180 to 192 A.D.

had been engraved on a copper tablet. She was also beautiful of face and slender of body, but still better and more beautiful was the chastity of her thoughts and her virginal purity. For this reason one of the most distinguished Roman dignitaries, Aquilinus, wished to betroth her to his son Aquilius. But when her parents asked her whether she consented to marry this noble youth, Eugenia replied:

"A husband ought to be chosen for his life rather than for his birth, for it is with him that one must live, not with his family."

Other noble and wealthy youths also desired to become betrothed to her, but she refused them all, under the pretext that their manner of life did not please her, while in truth she shunned marriage out of love for virginal purity, for her sole desire and care was to remain a virgin.

Thus the beautiful and pure vessel was being prepared to receive the divine myrrh, and soon true faith followed her good works, and Eugenia, pure, drew near to the pure fountain of piety. The beginning of her turning to God came through the following event. By chance, or rather by the divine will, she happened to read the book of the epistles of the holy Apostle Paul. Reading it attentively and comprehending it, Eugenia learned of the existence of the One True God who created the universe, and immediately her mind was enlightened, a mind that had long been purified beforehand and prepared to receive the Holy Spirit. In her heart she firmly believed in Christ, but she did not dare to confess Him openly with her lips, fearing the wrath of her parents.

When, by imperial decree, the Christians, whose teaching Eugenia greatly desired to hear, were expelled from Alexandria, she asked her parents' permission to go to one of her nearby estates, under the pretext of resting in rural solitude, but in fact in order to fulfill her desire. Not suspecting Eugenia's intention, her parents let her go to the estate. As she was riding in her chariot with her eunuchs and slaves past a monastery situated in one of the Christian settlements, Eugenia heard the monks singing behind the fence: "All the gods of the pagans are demons, but the Lord made the heavens" (Ps. 95:5). Hearing these words and ashamed of the error of her fathers, she sighed from the depths of her soul and said to her two eunuchs, one of whom was called Protus and the other Hyacinth:

"You have studied with me sufficiently; we have together mastered the teaching of the philosophers: Socrates, Aristotle and Plato, the known errors of the Stoics and the opinion of Epicurus[2], and likewise we have read and studied the writings of other sophists and poets. You surely understand that all this is fable, having nothing behind it except perhaps a deceptive resemblance of truth for many. Nor is it unknown to us how the Hellenes boast of their wisdom, some of whom try in every way to prove that there is no God at all, while others suppose that there are many gods, considering some of them greater and others lesser. But the Christians overcome all of them with a single word, saying: 'All the gods of the heathen are demons' (Ps. 95:5), for belief in these pagan gods is sheer madness and leads to perdition. The teaching of the Christians, however: 'But the Lord made the heavens' (Ps. 95:5), openly acknowledges the One God and gives us knowledge of our common Lord. Their Apostle Paul teaches in accordance with this, and I read his writings, which prove the existence of the One God, yesterday and the day before. I believe in the words of this apostle as very clear and worthy of trust, for they base faith on deeds. In his epistles the Apostle clearly points out the way to salvation, and you, if you wish, may follow his direction. As for me, I shall no longer be called your mistress, but your sister and fellow-servant, for we have one common Lord and Father, God. Let us then be of one accord and one mind, as brothers, and together let us resolve to turn to Christ. I have heard that the Christian bishop Elias has built a monastery here, where the monks unceasingly, by day and by night, glorify God with hymns. The bishop has entrusted the monastery to a certain presbyter Theodore, of whose wonderful deeds it is told that by his prayer he restores sight to the blind, casts out demons, and heals all diseases with a single word. It is also said that women are by no means permitted to enter this monastery. Therefore, cut my hair, dress me in men's clothing, and lead me there by night. We shall arrange our return to the city late in the evening; all the slaves are to go ahead of the chariot, and you two behind. I shall quietly step down from the chariot, and we shall vanish secretly

2. Socrates, Plato (his disciple), Aristotle (Plato's disciple), Epicurus – well-known Greek philosophers who lived in the 4th century B.C.

from everyone; the chariot will return home empty, and we shall go to the servants of God."

These words of Eugenia, as well as her intention, pleased both eunuchs in their hearts, and when night came they did as had been arranged beforehand. Late in the evening, on the return journey to the city, they secretly let Eugenia down from the chariot, so that none of the slaves noticed it; hiding themselves, they clothed her in men's garments, cut off her maiden hair, and set out for the monastery. Before reaching the monastery, they saw the approach of the blessed Elias, Bishop of Heliopolis[3]. In Egypt there was a custom that when a bishop made his rounds of the monasteries and churches, the people accompanied him with hymns. So it was here, with Bishop Elias, and ahead and behind him there walked about ten thousand men, singing and crying out:

"The path of the righteous is straight; Thou makest level the way of the righteous" (Is. 26:7).

Hearing such words, Eugenia said to her companions:

"Consider the meaning of these verses and notice how all their words fit us. When we were conversing about the True God, we heard the singing: 'All the gods of the heathen are demons, but the Lord made the heavens' (Ps. 95:5). Now, when we have set out on the road by which we desire to come to Christ, turning away from idol-worship, behold, several thousand people, meeting us, sing in one voice: 'The path of the righteous is straight; Thou makest level the way of the righteous' (Is. 26:7). And it seems to me that this has not happened by chance, but by the divine will. Let us see where this people is going, and if it is to the same monastery to which we are heading, let us join them and go together, as though we were their friends."

Joining the people who were walking and singing, they asked one man along the way:

"Who is that elder who is riding on a donkey in the midst of the people surrounding him?"

And they heard in reply that it was Bishop Elias, a Christian from his youth, who had grown up in a monastery. When as a boy he had

been sent to fetch fire from a neighbor, he carried glowing coals in the fold of his garment, and his garment was not scorched: so pleasing was he to God even in childhood.

"Some days ago," continued the one who had been asked, "a certain sorcerer named Zarius appeared in these parts, beguiling people with various tricks and enchantments. He called Bishop Elias a deceiver, and he himself said that he was a good teacher sent to men by Christ. Then a multitude of Christians gathered and came to our father whom you see here, and said: We hear Zarius asserting that he has been sent by Christ. Therefore either receive him into your fellowship, or else, if his words are false, reject him; and we shall follow whichever of you comes off the victor in the contest of words. Holy Bishop Elias agreed to dispute with Zarius. He trusted in Christ, as Zarius trusted in his demons. A day was appointed for the debate, and a place was prepared in the midst of Heliopolis. The sorcerer Zarius came with his magical charms, but the bishop came with words inspired by God. Having blessed the people, he said: 'By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God' (1 Jn. 4:2). Then, turning to Zarius, he began a great contest of words with him. But the sorcerer was skilled in his deception, proud and unrestrained in speech; he sought to conquer not by the power of truth but by shameless verbosity. Therefore the meek and gentle bishop could not out-argue him, and the people grieved that Zarius was getting the better of the bishop in the contest. Noticing this, Elias called for the tumult to be stilled and said to the people: 'We ought now to follow the instruction of the Apostle Paul, which he gives to his disciple Timothy: not to engage in word-battles, which profit nothing and only ruin those who hear' (2 Tim. 2:14). But lest anyone think we cite this testimony of the Apostle out of fear rather than to make the truth clear, let a fire be kindled in the middle of the city, and let us both enter the flame; whichever of us does not burn is the true messenger of Christ." This proposal pleased the whole people, and at once a great fire was lit. The bishop called the sorcerer into the flames, but he replied: "You go in

3. Heliopolis – a city in lower (northern) Egypt.

first, since you proposed this trial." Making the sign of the cross and raising his hands to heaven, the bishop walked into the midst of the fire and stood there for about half an hour, surrounded by the great flames, yet was not in the least scorched by them: the fire touched neither his hair nor even his garments. He called Zarius to enter the fire too, but Zarius, seized with terror, tried to run away. Then the people seized him and forcibly threw him into the fire. The sorcerer immediately began to burn and would have been utterly consumed had not Holy Bishop Elias rescued him from the fire, half-burnt but still alive. After this the sorcerer was driven with disgrace from the bounds of Heliopolis. And the bishop whom you see, wherever he goes, is everywhere accompanied by the people with divine singing.

Listening to this account, the blessed Eugenia rejoiced in spirit, marvelled, sighed deeply, and at last began earnestly to beg the man who was speaking with her (his name was Eutropius):

"I beg you, my lord, report to the holy bishop about us, who desire to turn from idols to Christ. We are brothers, and by common agreement we have resolved to become Christians and to dwell together in this monastery, never parting from one another."

"Keep silent about this for now," the man answered them, "until the bishop enters the monastery and rests a little from his journey. When there is a suitable time, I will, according to your wish, make your request known to him."

When they drew near the monastery, monks came out to meet the bishop, singing: "We have received Thy mercy, O God, in the midst of Thy people" (Ps. 47:10).

Together with the bishop and the people, Eugenia entered the monastery as well, resembling a youth in her clothing and short hair, along with her eunuchs. Having celebrated the Divine service in the church and taken a little food in the tenth hour of the evening, as was the custom of those who fasted, St. Elias rested from his labors and saw in a dream the following vision: certain men were carrying in their hands and honoring as a god, with sacrifices and worship, a female image resembling one of the Hellenic goddesses. It was grievous for the bishop

to see people beguiled and falling into idolatry, and he said, addressing the goddess who was among them:

"Is it fitting for you, a creature of God, to be honored by men as God and to receive from them the worship that belongs to God alone?"

Hearing these words, the goddess at once left the men who worshipped her and followed the bishop, saying:

"I will not leave you, nor turn aside from you, until you lead me to my Maker and Creator and deliver me into His hands."

Awakening from his sleep, the bishop pondered this vision. And Eutropius came in to him and said:

"Vladyka! Three youths, brothers by birth, unanimously forsaking idolatry and desiring to be numbered among those serving Christ in this monastery, entered the monastery today behind you, and with tears they begged me to make them known to your holiness."

The bishop cried out in great joy:

"I thank Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, who hast granted me today to hear such joyful tidings!"

And he at once ordered those three youths to be summoned to him. When they came in alone and stood before the bishop, the hierarch first offered a prayer, and then began to converse with Eugenia paternally and lovingly, asking about their names, origin and homeland. In maidenly confusion, Eugenia humbly answered:

"We are from the glorious city of Rome, and our homeland is Rome. We are brothers according to the flesh. The name of the first of us is Protus, the second is Hyacinth, and I myself am called Eugenius."

Looking kindly upon her, Bishop Elias said:

"Rightly are you called Eugenius, Eugenia! Your name[4] agrees with your spirit, for you have a noble, manly soul and in every respect are a man. Hold firmly to your resolution, conquer your female nature, and you will grow manly and be established in Christ, for whose sake you, though a woman, present yourself as a man, changing your feminine appearance and name out of love for God. I say this to you not to reproach you, nor to condemn your female nature, nor to turn you from

4. Eugenia, in the translation from the Greek, means "noble," "courageous."

your purpose, but so that you may know what care God has for you. He has revealed to me everything concerning you, hiding nothing: who you are, how you will come to me, and who else will come to me with you. Therefore, Eugenia, strive to show yourself no less manly in spirit than in appearance; for this too my Lord has revealed to me: that you have prepared yourself for Him as a pure vessel, keeping your virginity inviolate and rejecting the temptations of earthly life."

Then, turning to Protus and Hyacinthus, the hierarch said:

"You are slaves by name, but free in spirit, for your spirit is enslaved to nothing earthly. Therefore it is not I, but the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who says to you: 'I no longer call you servants, but friends' (Jn. 15:15). Blessed are you for such freedom, but still more blessed for your fellowship and union with Christ: for you unanimously agreed to take up His yoke, and in no way hindered the blessed Eugenia in her purpose, but burn together with her in spirit and in desire to serve the Lord. And when she departs from this life, you too will be counted worthy by the Lord of the same crowns and recompense as she."

No one else was present during this conversation of Eugenia and the eunuchs with the bishop. Elias commanded Eugenia to remain in men's clothing, for no one knew her secret. And she, together with the eunuchs, did not leave the monastery until the bishop had baptized them all and numbered them among the monastics.

Now let us learn what happened after the saint, together with Prot and Hyacinth, secretly descended from the chariot without the servants' knowledge, and how her parents grieved for her.

The empty chariot continued on its way and was already approaching the house, while the servants still walked ahead of it, unaware of what had happened. The household servants came out with lamps to meet Eugenia. Approaching the chariot, they found it empty, and not seeing their mistress, they were in great perplexity. Her father, mother, brothers and all the servants were thrown into confusion, and cries, lamentations, sobbing and loud weeping arose everywhere. Inquiries began throughout the whole city, and the people of Alexandria wondered what had become of the ruler's daughter. Numerous servants were dispatched everywhere to search for Eugenia. They went through

not only the whole city but the whole land of Egypt, and questioned everyone along the way and in the houses: merchants, farmers and travelers, but nowhere could they learn anything of that precious pearl which the Right Hand of the Most High had kept until the appointed time in His treasury.

Her parents wept day and night for Eugenia and sobbed inconsolably, often calling upon her name, tearing their faces, sprinkling ashes on their heads, and falling to the ground from exhaustion and grief of heart.

"Our beloved daughter Eugenia," they cried out, "our light, where have you hidden yourself from our eyes? Our consolation, where have you concealed yourself? Our hope, have you indeed perished?"

The parents wept over their daughter, the brothers wept over their sister, and the servants, both men and women, shed tears over their mistress. All the citizens likewise grieved for Eugenia and shared in the sorrow of the governor, as of a good lord and ruler. Then they began to question the magicians and sorcerers and to offer many sacrifices to the idols, in the hope that one of the gods might declare what had become of the lost maiden. But they could learn nothing from them either. The magicians and sorcerers were silent, being false and ignorant, and the idols were without a soul. At last someone among the people of Alexandria invented a fable to console the governor: it was asserted that it had been revealed to them that the gods had loved Eugenia's beauty, had carried her off to heaven and numbered her among themselves. The grieving father believed this fable, was a little comforted in his sorrow, and with difficulty turned his weeping into rejoicing. He at once commanded that an idol resembling his beloved daughter be cast in gold, set it up in a prominent place in Alexandria, and began to honor Eugenia publicly as a new goddess, with new festivals and the offering of many sacrifices. In this he thought to console his grief. However, Eugenia's mother Claudia and her brothers Avitus and Sergius did not believe the fable, and continued to weep unceasingly and inconsolably for Eugenia.

Meanwhile, the blessed maiden, who had concealed herself under a man's clothing and name and was considered a man by her austere manner of life, lived in the aforementioned monastery, diligently per-

forming the monastic obedience and serving God. She so advanced in the divine teaching that within two years she knew all of Holy Scripture by heart; and her soul was so filled with peace that everyone regarded her as one of the Angels. No one could discover her feminine nature, which the power of Christ and her spotless virginity concealed, and by her way of life she astonished even perfect men. Her speech was humble, courteous, gentle and sparing, full of the fear of God and of edification. No one came to the church service before her, and no one left after her. She was of benefit and edification to all: she comforted the sorrowing, rejoiced with those who rejoiced; those given over to anger and fury she calmed with a single word; and upon the proud man the sight of her humble way of life acted so that it at once subdued his pride and made him meek.

After some time, she received from God the gift of working miracles. When she visited any sick person, at her very coming the illness was driven out and perfect health was granted to the sick one. Two eunuchs, Prot and Hyacinthus, remained with her constantly; they were imitators of her life, her faithful servants and friends.

Three years after her turning to God, the abbot of that monastery died, and the assembled brethren unanimously besought the blessed one to become their abbot. They did not know the mystery guarded by God, that their Eugenius was by nature not a man but a woman. They saw her wise, spotless and God-pleasing life, far surpassing the life of all the ascetics of that monastery, and therefore for a long time they entreated and urged her to accept authority over them. On the one hand, fearing that it was unfitting and unlawful for her, as a woman, to govern men, and on the other hand, ashamed to deceive and to reject the earnest entreaty of so many honorable monks, the saint said to them:

"I beg you, brethren, bring here the Holy Gospel."

And when it had been brought, she continued:

"It behooves Christians, in every election, first to inquire of the Lord Christ Himself. Let us see what Christ commands us in this matter, and let us obey His good pleasure."

When the Gospel was opened in the presence of all the brethren, they found the following words: "whoever would be great among you

shall be your servant; and whoever would be first among you shall be your slave" (Mt. 20:26–27).

After these words were read, the saint exclaimed:

"Behold, I obey the command of Christ and your request. Let me be the servant and slave of your love."

And all rejoiced at her consent. The so-called Eugenius, in truth Eugenia, accepted the abbacy of that monastery, and became for all as it were a captive and slave, ceaselessly laboring for the whole brotherhood: carrying water, chopping wood, cleaning all the cells, and serving everyone with great zeal. For her own dwelling Eugenia chose the cell of the gatekeeper, so as not to show herself superior to others by the grandeur of her cell. Occupied with the affairs of the monastery, she never omitted the customary church rule, that is, Matins, the Hours (and on special days the Liturgy) and Vespers. It seemed to her a needlessly wasted hour in which she did not give praise to God, and she took care that not even one hour should pass without the glorification of God. Her hands were at work, and her lips were in unceasing prayer. She received power over unclean spirits, to cast them out of men, and she was granted the grace to work other miracles, of which there would not be time to tell in detail. But let us tell how the persecution of the saint began, and also the rest of her time and the end of her life and sufferings.

There was in Alexandria a woman named Melanthia, rich in possessions but poor in good works. She fell ill with a fever and suffered from it for more than a year. Her estate was near the monastery where Eugenia lived. Having once heard that a monk named Eugenius healed all kinds of sicknesses, she hastened to him and begged him to heal her of her ailment. Taking pity on her, Eugenia anointed her with holy oil, and at once she vomited up everything harmful within her that had caused the illness; and, recovered, she returned on foot to her estate. Some time later she prepared three vessels of pure silver, filled them with money, and sent them to her disinterested physician in thanks for the healing she had received. But Eugenia did not accept the gift and sent it back to her, saying:

"We abound and overabound in all good things in God our Lord. But I advise you, beloved Melanthia, to distribute all this to the poor and the needy."

Seeing her gifts returned, Melanthia was greatly grieved. Coming to the monastery, with what entreaties did she not beg, and with what petitions did she not urge Eugenia not to refuse the gifts offered! At last she with difficulty persuaded the abbot Eugenius to order that the vessels be carried into the church sacristy, where the objects used in church service were kept.

From then on Melanthia began to visit Eugenius often, and she conceived a strong love for him, not knowing that a woman was hidden beneath the man's clothing and name. Seeing him so young and beautiful, Melanthia did not think that such a youth could always live in purity; and she began to ascribe her healing not to his holiness but to his medical skill. And so from day to day she grew in the ever greater desire to enter into fleshly union with him, and she sought only a convenient time and place to fulfill her desire. And one day, being on her estate not far from the monastery, Melanthia, inflamed with unclean lust for the young monk, feigned illness and sent to him with the request that he visit her alone and help her, as he had the first time.

When she came, the blessed Eugenia sat down before the bed of Melanthia, who was suffering not from illness but from carnal desire. Gazing at Eugenius's face, Melanthia could no longer keep hidden the fire that had long been smoldering within her. She opened her shameless lips and began an adulterous speech, enticing and drawing him into sin, as the Egyptian woman, the wife of Potiphar, once enticed Joseph (Gen. 39:7–20).

"I am consumed with unbearable desire and love for you," she said, "and my spirit cannot find rest until you consent to become lord over all my property and, for me, a husband. Why do you vainly torment yourself with needless abstinence, and of your own will waste the days of your youth in poverty and want, so greatly wearing out your body and drying up the beauty of your face? Here are vast estates, here is a multitude of gold and silver, precious stones and costly garments, a great number of male and female slaves! Here, finally, you see me too, young

and beautiful, widowed only this year, and moreover childless, so that there is no heir to my wealth. Inherit it yourself and become my master and lord."

All this and much more Melanthia said, enticing Eugenia. But the venerable Eugenia, ashamed of the shamelessness of this harlot, answered her sternly:

"Be silent, woman, be silent! And do not try to harm me with the poison of the ancient serpent. I see that you have made yourself a great dwelling of the devil. Depart from the servants of God, tempter! Let your riches be inherited by lustful men like yourself; our riches consist in poverty with Christ. As for marriage, let not even our mind ever think of fleshly pleasures. O blessed purity, let us not sell you for perishable riches! O holy virginity, let us not defile you by adultery! O Mother of God and Virgin, in whom I hope, let me not betray my vows! Our one marriage is our love for Christ, our one riches are the good things prepared in heaven, our one inheritance is the knowledge of the truth!"

Having said this, the blessed one at once rose and went back to her monastery. Melanthia, filled with unspeakable shame and at the same time with anger, went to the city and, presenting herself before the governor, said to him:

A certain Christian youth, who pretends to be a physician and lives in a monastery not far from my estate, came into my house, and I allowed him to enter my chamber to treat me. But he, taking me for one of the dishonorable and shameless women, began to press me toward an evil deed, first with flattering words, and then he wished to use violence; and if I had not cried out and my maidservant had not hastened to run at my call, this shameless youth would surely have defiled me by force, as a barbarian does a captive woman.

Such words of Melanthia brought the governor into a great rage, and he immediately sent servants to seize not only the youth Eugenius, called a physician, but all who lived with him, and, bound in iron fetters, to hold them in chains. Since one dungeon could not contain all the monks who were with Eugenia, they were distributed among different dungeons. The report of this event spread not only throughout all Alex-

andria but also to the surrounding cities, and the Christians suffered many insults and reproaches from the pagans, for all who heard Melanthia's account believed the truth of her words, since she was renowned among the pagans for her honesty and nobility of birth.

A day was appointed on which the trial of the monks and their execution were to take place; some of them the governor wished to give to be devoured by beasts, others to burn with fire, others to hang on a tree, and the rest to destroy by various other tortures. And when the appointed day came, a multitude of people gathered, not only from the city but from all its surroundings. There also gathered a very great number of Christians, among whom were many presbyters and several bishops: they came to see the death of the innocent servants of God (the Christians were convinced of the falsity of the slander), to take their remains and commit them to honorable burial.

As soon as the governor Philip came with his sons Avitus and Sergius, and sat down in the customary place reserved for the judge, the blessed Eugenia, whose secret no one yet knew, was at once brought into the middle of the arena with her eunuchs and the other monks, bound in heavy iron fetters. Then the people cried out loudly:

"Let these impious lawbreakers perish!"

The governor, however, commanded that the leader of the evil ones (as they called her), the undefiled Lamb of Christ, be brought nearer to him for examination, that all the instruments of torture be laid before her, and that the ready and dreadful executioners stand by.

And St. Eugenia stood at the trial before her father and brothers, innocent of any wrong, concealed under the men's monastic garb, with her head bowed low so that she would not be recognized at once. Turning to her, the governor asked sternly:

"Tell us, lawless Christian, did your Christ so command you that you should do shameful deeds and by cunning incline honorable women to fulfil your evil desires? Tell us, impious one, how did you dare to enter the house of the most illustrious lady Melanthia and press her most noble purity toward defilement? Deceitfully pretending to be a physician, you proved to be an enemy and a ravisher. And so you shall re-

ceive a worthy execution for your shameless and insolent intention, and, being evil, you shall perish an evil death."

Thus the governor spoke with great anger, and the blessed Eugenia answered him meekly:

"My Lord, Jesus Christ, whom I serve, teaches purity and promises eternal life to those who keep undefiled virginity. We could at once show that Melanthia falsely accuses us. But it is better that we ourselves suffer and not lose the fruits of our patience, than that she, defeated and exposed, should have to suffer any evil. Yet if you swear to me by the name of your emperors that you will not inflict any harm upon this false witness, we shall now question her about the sin of which she unjustly accuses us, and we shall see that she herself is guilty of it."

After the governor had sworn to her and promised to fulfil what she asked, Eugenia said, turning to Melanthia:

"Melanthia, your very name[5] bears witness to blackness and darkening! With your false slander you have prepared many different torments for the Christians. Insist, then, that we be tormented, burned, and beaten! But be assured that Christ's servants are not such as you falsely portray them. Bring forward, then, the maidservant whom you called an eyewitness of our sin, so that from her own lips the lie may be exposed and the truth made plain."

But the maidservant who was brought in added lie to lie, to please her mistress, for how could she say anything against her?

"I know," she said, "that this shameless youth often sins with ordinary women; he is insolent, he has repeatedly importuned me as well, and at last he dared to assault even my mistress. Entering her bedchamber at the first hour of the day, he first conversed with her as a physician, concerned for her health; then he began to speak shameless words, and at last wished to use violence upon her, and he would probably have accomplished his lawless deed if I had not hastily called the other maidservants and delivered our mistress from the hands of this fornicator."

5. Melanthia, in the translation from the Greek, means "black-colored."

The judge ordered the other attendants to be summoned, but they too gave testimony against the monk Eugenius, helping their mistress. Then the governor cried out in great anger:

"What can you say in reply to them, impious one, when so many witnesses overcome you and expose your lawlessness?"

"Now the time has come to speak," answered St. Eugenia, "for the time of silence is over. The time has come to confess the truth freely, so that the lie raised against us may not triumph beyond measure and evil rumors about Christians may not circulate among the pagans. Indeed, I had wished to keep my secret to the end of my life, and so to expose at the future Judgment of Christ the lie raised against us and to prove my purity before Him for whose love I kept it. What I have carefully tried until now to conceal, I must now reveal, so that lawlessness may not triumph over innocence and pagan impiety may not mock and scorn a pious and chaste Christian life. I shall reveal the truth not out of vanity, but for the glorification of the name of Jesus Christ; for such is the power of this holy name that women who live in the fear of God are counted worthy of the dignity of men, and persons of one sex cannot be higher in faith than persons of the other sex, as the Christian teacher, the Apostle Paul, says: with God there is no distinction between man and woman, 'for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3:28). So also I have desired, for the sake of Christ, in whom I have believed, whom I have loved with all my soul and upon whom I have placed all my hope, to be in life and in outward appearance more a man than a woman, keeping my virginity for the one most pure and incorruptible Heavenly Bridegroom."

Speaking thus, she tore open her garment at the top, uncovered a part of her holy and pure virginal body, and the governor saw that she was a woman. Then Eugenia said to him:

"My lord, you are my father according to the flesh, Claudia is my mother, and Avitus and Sergius sitting with you are my brothers. I myself am your daughter Eugenia, who have renounced the world and all its pleasures for the love of Christ; here are Protus and Hyacinth, my eunuchs, with whom I received the teaching of Christ. And such grace has Christ shown upon me that, in His mercy, He has made me a con-

queror over all desires and passions, and I firmly believe that He will keep me to the end such as I now am."

She had not yet finished her speech when her father and brothers, on the basis of her words and also by some features of her face (for they were looking at her intently), recognized that she was indeed Eugenia. At once, in unspeakable joy and with tears, they leaped from their places and rushed to her, embracing her, kissing her, weeping for joy and rejoicing that they had suddenly found Eugenia, without whom the very light of this world had ceased to be pleasant to them. Immediately it was announced to her mother, Claudia, that her daughter Eugenia had been found. She came hastily, and did everything she could: seeing her beloved Eugenia, she showered her with tender words, gazing at her daughter as at one raised from the dead. Seeing what had happened, the people marveled and cried out loudly:

"One is Christ, one is the true God, the God of the Christians!"

And the multitude of Christians who had come with their bishops and presbyters for the burial of the martyrs' bodies also sang, filled with inexpressible joy: "Thy right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power; Thy right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces. Who is a God so great as our God, who reveals the deep and hidden things and exposes the cunning of the wise, who catches the wise in their own craftiness" (Ex. 15:6; Ps. 76:14; Job 5:13).

Then they brought golden garments adorned with precious ornaments, in which the parents and brothers of Eugenia, against her will, clothed her, and seated her in a high place, so that all might see her and, together with them, rejoice at the recovery of the one who had been lost. At once the monks who had been in chains together with Eugenia were freed from their fetters, were caressed, and were honored as true servants of Christ.

Melanthia was filled with great fear and shame, and before she had even left the place of judgment, fire fell from heaven upon her house and burned it to the ground with all its riches and treasures, so that not a trace of anything remained. There was great joy among all the faithful in Alexandria and in all Egypt, especially when the governor Philip himself, with his wife, his sons and his whole household, was baptized

and believed in our Lord Jesus Christ. A great multitude of pagans then received holy Baptism, and peace was restored to the Church of Christ.

Shortly after these events, the governor Philip sent a letter to the emperors Severus and Antoninus[6], in which he wrote that it was not beneficial to the Roman realm to expel Christians from the cities, since they were very necessary for the common good of the people. The emperors heeded his counsel, and in all the cities of Egypt the Christians regained their places, lands, churches and dignities; enjoying peace, Christian piety flourished.

But holiness is always accompanied by the envy of the enemy, and sin wars against virtue. So also now, some of the most distinguished idolaters of Alexandria found it painful to see the number of Christians increasing day by day, while the number of those who worshipped idols diminished more and more. Taught by their father, the devil, they went to the emperors with a slander against the governor Philip.

"For nine whole years," they said, "Philip has governed the land of Egypt well and has strictly observed the imperial laws. But we do not know what has now befallen him, for he has changed so much. He has abandoned the worship of the gods of our fathers, and he is drawing the whole people after him to the worship of the One whom (as all affirm) the Jews put to death in Palestine by crucifying Him on the cross. There is no longer any respect or due obedience to your imperial laws. He has preferred impious Christians to all of us, and many of them, when they visit the temples of our gods, heap countless reproaches upon them, calling them wood, insensate stones and lifeless idols."

By such and similar speeches they stirred up the anger of both emperors against Philip, and they sent him the following letter:

"The most divine emperor who reigned before us, knowing your piety and reverence for the ancestral Roman gods, appointed you in Alexandria not as governor but, as it were, as king of Egypt, and decreed that you should hold this land without interruption until your death, and that no one else should be set in your place. We too have kept this

6. The Roman emperor Septimius Severus (from 193 to 211 A.D.) had as co-ruler his son Antoninus.

honor inviolate, but only so long as you were a friend and servant of the gods. Now, however, we hear of you that you have forsaken the gods also, and that you show yourself ill-disposed toward us. Therefore we command that either you return to the former worship of the Roman gods, and then continue to enjoy honors and glory as before, or, if you do not cease rejecting the gods, immediately lay down your rank and relinquish your estates."

Having read the imperial letter, the governor pretended to be ill, so that he might have time to sell all his property and distribute it, partly to the churches and partly to the poor.

The blessed Philip possessed the gift of eloquence, and by his words he persuaded and converted to Christianity many noble pagans, while he strengthened and confirmed those who were faint-hearted and wavering in the faith.

When his property had been sold and distributed, he laid aside the office of governor, and at once all the Christians of Alexandria chose him as their bishop. After some time, another governor, named Terentius, came from Rome to take his place. He wished to kill Philip, but he feared the people, for everyone was ready to lay down his life for his bishop. Therefore he hired secret assassins, who, entering and finding the saint alone, praying to God, struck him with their swords and then went out and disappeared. This became known at once throughout the city, and great weeping, lamentation and confusion spread everywhere. Fearing that the people would perceive his treachery, Terentius immediately ordered the murderers to be sought out, and had them thrown into prison, bound with heavy fetters, as if intending to subject them to cruel tortures and execution. But the blessed bishop Philip lived three days after receiving his wounds, and, having reposed in the Lord by a martyr's death, he was also granted the martyr's crown. He had served as bishop for one year and three months. He was buried within the city, in the place known as Isium, in the church that he himself had built.

After keeping the murderers in prison for some time, the governor Terentius released them, as though by imperial command, and then everyone understood that the holy bishop had been killed on his orders. After the death of her father, the holy Eugenia gathered around her the

Christian virgins and continued with them to serve God, living a virginal life; her mother Claudia built a large hospice and devoted herself to serving travelers and the sick. After a considerable time, she returned to her homeland, Rome, taking with her both sons and the blessed daughter Eugenia, and settled there on her estate. The Roman government received Avitus and Sergius kindly, and one of them was appointed prefect in Carthage[7], and the other imperial governor in Africa.

Meanwhile the holy Eugenia, living in Rome, secretly brought many virgins, the daughters of noble lords, to Christ and exhorted them to keep their virginity. At that time there lived in Rome a young virgin of imperial lineage, orphaned after the death of her parents, named Basilla. She had been entrusted until her majority to her uncle Elinus, and had been betrothed by the emperors to a youth known for his courage and nobility, named Pompeius. But the marriage was postponed for several years, for Basilla was still very young when her parents died. Often hearing the name of Christ and of Eugenia, of her virginal and chaste life, and of the miracles wrought by the power of Christ, she was inflamed in spirit, for the Lord by mysterious ways was calling her to His heavenly mansion. She had two desires: to learn with certainty about Christ and to see Eugenia. But she could neither go to her herself nor converse with her, both from fear that her betrothed would learn of it and because of the persecution of Christians then raging in Rome. Therefore Basilla sent to Eugenia a servant devoted to her, asking that she, even if only in writing, would proclaim Christ to her and teach her how she ought to believe in Him.

The holy Eugenia was greatly gladdened by such a messenger. Deciding together with her mother and the eunuchs that a letter could not teach as well as words coming from a person's lips, she bade the eunuchs prepare themselves, wishing to send them as it were a gift to Basilla. Sending them, Eugenia wrote:

"Behold, I send you as a gift, beloved sister Basilla, my two faithful servants, the eunuchs Protus and Hyacinthus, who grew up with me from youth, and may they be to you from me a living letter."

7. An ancient city in North Africa. Today Tunis is situated on its site.

Basilla received the eunuchs with joy; in appearance they were servants, but in truth they were apostles of Christ. Conversing with her both day and night, they taught her the holy faith, for she listened constantly, with attention, joy and tenderness, to the divine words coming from their lips, and with her whole heart she believed in the one Christian God, the Creator of all. The Pope of Rome, the blessed Cornelius[8], learning of this, came to her secretly and baptized her in the name of the Holy Trinity. Then her uncle Elinus also believed in Christ, so that Basilla could easily see Eugenia and enjoy holy and pleasant conversation with her. Every night Eugenia came to her house without hindrance, under the protection of her uncle.

In this way the holy Eugenia and her blessed mother Claudia converted many people to Christ. All the Christian widows of Rome found refuge with Claudia, and the virgins with Eugenia, and found rest for body and soul there. Every Saturday evening the holy Pope of Rome Cornelius sent prayers and psalms[9] to the house of Claudia, so that they might pray and glorify God all night; and in the morning, when the cocks crowed, he himself came to them, baptized those turning to Christ, celebrated the Divine Liturgy and communed all the women with the Divine Mysteries. And the Church of God increased and flourished amid persecution, like a lily among thorns. O how many souls the holy virgins Eugenia and Basilla brought to God among the virgins, the holy Claudia among the women, and the blessed eunuchs Protus and Hyacinthus among the youths!

When the impious emperors Valerian and Gallienus[10] came to power, the persecution of Christians grew more severe. The emperors issued a decree to slay all the teachers of the Christians, and first of all they began to search for the holy Pope Cornelius in order to kill him.

Meeting the holy Basilla at this time, the holy Eugenia said to her:

"The Lord has revealed to me that you will soon receive the martyr's crown for your virginity."

8. St. Cornelius, Pope of Rome, governed the Roman Church from 251 to 252 A.D.
9. That is, liturgical books, which at that time were a rarity and were held by few.
10. Valerian – Roman emperor, reigned from 253 to 260 A.D. Gallienus, his son, reigned from 260 to 268 A.D.

"The Lord has also been pleased to make known to me concerning you," replied Basilla, "that you will receive a double martyr's crown: one for the sorrows and afflictions you endured in Alexandria, and the other for the blood you will shed in suffering for Christ."

Then the blessed Eugenia raised her hands to heaven and said:

"Lord Jesus, Son of the Most High, who for our salvation was born of the Virgin, Thy Most Pure Mother, bring all the virgins entrusted to me by Thee, in incorruptible virginity, into the eternal Kingdom of Thy glory!"

Then, turning to the multitude of Christ's virgins who were sitting with her and with Basilla, the blessed Eugenia said:

The time had come for gathering the grapes, when the clusters are cut and then offered as wine upon the royal table. And there is no mighty kingdom or high rank that is not adorned with the blood of these clusters. So you also, my branches and clusters of my heart, be ready for the Lord. Virginity brings us near to God; virginity makes us like the Angels; it is the mother of eternal life, the companion of holiness, the safe road to heaven, the mistress of joy, the leader of the power of working wonders, the warmth and crown of faith, the strength and firm foundation of love. There is nothing for which we ought to strive so much, nothing about which we ought to be so concerned, as remaining in undefiled virginity; and yet it is more glorious still to die for virginity. What are the vain and deceptive delights of this world? They bring a temporary joy when they appear, but eternal sufferings when they vanish; they bring a short-lived laughter only to strike with everlasting weeping; they show the quickly fading flowers of pleasure only to bring lasting sorrows; they promise a happy life in the present age only to hand one over to eternal torments in the age to come. For all these reasons, most beloved virgins, who until now have struggled with me in the virginal ascetic labor, continue to abide in the love of the Lord as you have begun. For you the days of temporary weeping have come, so that you may rejoice and be glad in eternity. As for me, I commit you to the Holy Spirit, and I believe that He will keep you pure and undefiled. Do not strive any more to see my fleshly face, but look with spiritual eyes upon my deeds and actions.

Having given them such an exhortation, Eugenia kissed each of them and comforted those who were weeping; then, having prayed together with Basilla and exchanged kisses, they parted. On that same day one of St. Basilla's maidservants went to her mistress's betrothed, Pompeius, and said to him:

"My master, I know that the emperors promised my mistress to you in marriage, and you have already waited more than six years for her to come of age, yet you do not conclude the marriage. I have come now to inform you that you will no longer be able to enter into marriage with her, for her uncle and tutor is a Christian, and she herself has turned with her whole soul to the Christian faith and now scorns not only you but the whole world. She has two eunuchs, sent to her by Eugenia, and she honors them as her lords, kissing their feet every day as though they were immortal gods. These eunuchs are the teachers of Christian sorcery."

The maidservant's account threw Pompeius into the greatest rage; he leapt up from his seat and at once went to Elinus, Basilla's tutor.

"In these days," he said to him, "I have resolved to enter into marriage. Therefore, allow me to see the maiden whom the invincible emperors have given me as a wife."

The tutor immediately guessed that Pompeius had learned of their conversion to Christ, and he answered:

"While Basilla was young and without understanding, I guarded and kept her as the apple of my eye and brought her up in a fitting manner. But now she is coming to perfect age and reason, and by the nobility of her birth she wishes to be entirely free and subject to no one. Therefore it is not in my power to allow you to see her; that depends on her own consent."

Even more enraged, Pompeius came to Basilla's dwelling and began to knock at the doors, ordering the doorkeepers to announce him to Basilla.

But on learning of his arrival, Basilla did not admit him. "It is not fitting for a young man," she replied, "to hold conversations alone with a maiden, and it is not seemly for a maiden even to look upon a man's

face. Besides, I do not know with what purpose Pompeius has come to me."

Withdrawing in shame, Pompeius prevailed upon some nobles, and together with them threw himself at the feet of the emperors with a complaint against his bride and against Eugenia.

"O most illustrious emperors," he said, "help your Romans and drive from the city the faith in the new God preached by Eugenia. For a long time these people who call themselves Christians have done harm to the people. They trample on our laws, despise our gods as vain idols, and pervert the very laws of nature, not allowing a bride to marry the man to whom she is betrothed. If there are no marriages, where will people be born from? And if they are not born, over whom will you rule? Where will the armies and the strength of the Roman people come from? Who will defeat the enemies? How will our fatherland exist, and how will human life be ordered?"

Pompeius spoke much more to this effect, weeping as he did. The emperor Gallienus, together with all his nobles, took pity on him and at once issued a decree that the maiden Basilla must either consent to marry her betrothed or be put to death by the sword. As for Eugenia, he commanded that she either offer sacrifice to the gods or perish in torments. Moreover, the emperor ordered that all Christians be put to death, and not only Christians, but also those who dared to harbor Christians would be subject to execution.

When the imperial decree reached the holy virgin Basilla, she answered loudly and fearlessly:

"My betrothed is the King of kings, Christ, the Son of God, and apart from Him I do not wish to know any other, mortal husband."

After these words she was at once slain with the sword. The two holy eunuchs, Protus and Hyacinth, were also seized and dragged to a temple of idols to worship the vile god Zeus[11]. But as soon as the saints

11. The repose of the holy Eugenia, Claudia, Basilla, Protus and Hyacinthus took place about 262 A.D. The tombs of Protus and Hyacinthus were opened under Pope Damasus in 366 A.D., and a church was soon built over them. At present the relics of Protus rest in Rome in the church of St. John the Forerunner belonging to the Florentines; the relics of Hyacinthus in the church of the Apostle Paul at Ostia; the relics of Eugenia in the church of the Twelve Apostles; the relics of Basilla in the church of Praxedes.

had entered the temple, the idol fell at their feet and crumbled into dust and ashes. The governor of the city, Nicetius, learning of this, ordered that their heads be cut off, supposing that by their sorcery they had overthrown the god Zeus. He summoned St. Eugenia to himself and began to question her about magical arts. Answering him, the saint began to speak at length and wisely of the One True God, whose name the demons themselves fear and tremble at, so that they fall down together with the idols. Paying no heed to her words, the governor ordered that she be taken to the temple of Diana to offer sacrifice, but before she had even entered it, the temple collapsed together with the idol. Learning of this, the emperor commanded that she be thrown into the river Tiber with a stone tied around her neck. But when this was done, the stone immediately came untied, and the saint walked on the water as though on dry land. Then she was seized again and cast into a furnace heated to a great blaze, but the furnace suddenly cooled, without harming the saint in the least, and she came out of it completely unhurt. Then they threw her into a deep and gloomy ditch and for ten days starved her, yet the ray of Divine grace did not cease to shine upon the saint, and food was sent to her from heaven. In the ditch our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to Eugenia and said:

"I am your Savior, whom you have loved and love with your whole soul and with all your heart, and for whose sake you endure these sufferings. I will clothe you with great glory and fill you with ineffable joy. Let it be a sign for you that I will receive you into My heavenly dwellings on the very day when I was born on earth from a pure, virginal womb."

This appearance of the Lord filled the heart of the holy virgin with ineffable joy, and she began to await joyfully the time of her separation from the body. On the very day of the Nativity of Christ an executioner was sent to her in the ditch, and he put her to death with the sword[12].

Thus the holy and venerable virgin Eugenia came to the end of her temporal life and earthly sufferings, and to the beginning of an eternal and blessed life. Her blessed mother Claudia, with her household, took

12. According to the Menologion of the Blessed Jerome and some others, St. Eugenia suffered on December 25.

her holy and honorable body and buried it on the family estate, not far from Rome, where St. Eugenia in her lifetime had buried the bodies of many believers.

When one night her mother was weeping at her tomb, St. Eugenia appeared to her with a multitude of other virgins, surrounded by great glory, and said:

"Rejoice and be glad, my mother, that Christ has brought me into the joy of the saints, and my father into the number of the patriarchs; on the Lord's day He will receive you also into eternal rejoicing. Charge your sons, my brothers, that they keep faithfully to the end the Christian calling received in baptism, that they be my brothers not only in body but also in spirit, and that in this way we may offer our whole family as an acceptable gift to God."

As the saint spoke thus to her mother, there were heard the voices of a multitude of holy Angels singing and glorifying the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the One God in Trinity, to Whom be glory and praise from us sinners forever. Amen.

* * *

Memory of the Venerable Nicholas the Monk

Память преподобного Николая монаха

Our Venerable Father Nicholas was at first a voivode under the Greek emperor Nicephorus[13] and had many military regiments under his command. Once, when the emperor Nicephorus was waging war against the Bulgarians, Nicholas also set out on campaign with his soldiers; toward evening he entered an inn, supped together with the innkeeper, and, after praying, lay down to sleep. But then, during the second and third watches of the night[14], the innkeeper's daughter, stirred by a satanic desire for sin, quietly approached the

13. The Byzantine emperor Nicephorus I reigned from 802 to 811 A.D.

14. In antiquity, to guard dwellings and cities from the attacks of enemies and other threatening dangers, watchmen were divided into several shifts, so that by a regular rotation of the guard its weariness might be prevented. Therefore time too was reckoned by watches – the first watch, the second watch, and so on.

voivode's bed, woke him, and began to entice him to fornication with sinful words.

"Turn away from your satanic, frenzied lust, maiden," said the voivode to her, "and do not desire to defile your virginity, or to cast me, wretched man, down into the depths of hell!"

Somewhat ashamed, she withdrew, but after a short while she came to him again, trying to lead the chaste man into sin. The voivode sent her away once more, but she came to him a third time, inflamed by the devil with lustful desire. Then the blessed voivode said to her:

"O wretched woman, full of all shamelessness and frenzy, slave of your passions! Do you not see that the demons are stirring you up, desiring to corrupt your virginity and make you a laughingstock and a disgrace to all your kin and to all people, and to cast your soul into eternal torment? Do you not see also that I, unworthy as I am, am going to a bloody war against a foreign people? How then shall I defile my body by going into battle! No, God will help me, and I shall not be defiled!"

This and much more he said to the shameless maiden, and with shame he sent her away from himself. When the day came, the voivode rose, and after prayer set out on his further journey. The following night he saw in a dream that he was standing in some airy place. Near him sat One Mighty, whose right leg was laid upon the left.

"Do you see those warriors on both sides?" He asked Nicholas.

"Yes, my Lord," he answered, "I see that the Greeks are slaying the Bulgarians."

Then the Man who had appeared to the righteous voivode said to him:

"Look at Us."

Looking at that Mighty One, the voivode saw that He had moved His left leg onto the right. After this the righteous Nicholas turned toward the warriors and saw that the Bulgarians had grown strong and were mercilessly slaying the Greek regiments.

When the battle ceased, the Mighty One said to the righteous voivode:

"Examine the bodies of the slain carefully, and tell Me what you see."

Looking around, the voivode saw that the whole field was covered with dead bodies, but in their midst there was one place, overgrown with grass and empty, of such size that only one man could lie upon it.

"My Lord," he said, "the whole field is covered with the corpses of the Greeks who were mercilessly slain, except for one place alone, on which only one man could lie."

"What do you think of this?" the Mighty One then asked him.

And the voivode answered Him:

"I am ignorant, my Lord, and an unlettered man, and I do not understand it."

Then that awesome Man said to him:

"This empty place overgrown with grass, equal to the bed of one man, was prepared for you. You were to lie upon it, slain together with your comrades, and fill its emptiness. But since in the past night you manfully drove from you the malicious serpent who thrice wrestled with you, enticing you to sin and desiring to destroy you, therefore you yourself have freed yourself from death: this grass-grown place you have left empty, and your soul you have saved together with your body. For the rest of your life, having been saved from death, you shall labor for Me."

Seeing and hearing all this, the righteous Nicholas trembled, started up from his sleep, seized with fear and dread, and rising, prayed to God for his warriors. When the battle came and both sides fought with great fury, at first the Greeks overpowered and defeated the Bulgarians, but then the Bulgarians suddenly rallied and began to overpower the Greeks. Like enraged beasts they bravely fell upon the Greek regiments and drove the Greeks back, mercilessly slaughtering them. Soon the whole Greek force fell by the swords of the Bulgarians, and the emperor Nicephorus himself with difficulty escaped with a small retinue.

Then the commander of the Greek regiments, the blessed Nicholas, seeing the fulfilment of his dream, gave thanks to God for deliverance from death, and, leaving his rank, withdrew into a monastery, ceaselessly weeping and lamenting the fallen warriors. Having received the

holy schema and zealously served God for many years, he became one of the far-seeing and great fathers. With them he was counted worthy of a place in heaven with Christ Jesus our Lord, to Whom be glory forever. Amen.

* * *



THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 25

25 декабря

New Calendar December 25 · Old Calendar January 7 (civil dates)

Narrative on the Nativity of the Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ

Сказание о Рождестве Господа Бога и Спаса нашего Иисуса Христа

The Nativity of Jesus Christ came about in this way. It took place after the betrothal of His most blessed Mother, the Most Pure Virgin Mary, to Joseph, a righteous man who was already old (for he was eighty years of age). The Most Pure Virgin was given to him, according to the testimony of St. Gregory of Nyssa[1] and St. Epiphanius of Cyprus, under the guise of marriage, so that he might guard her virginity and care for her. Even before they began to live together, it became evident that she had conceived in her womb of the Holy Spirit. Joseph was Mary's supposed husband, but in truth he was the guardian of her virginal purity dedicated to God and the witness of her sinless life. For it pleased the Lord to conceal from the devil the mystery of His Incarnation from the Most Pure Virgin, and for this purpose He veiled His Mother's virginity with a marriage, so that the enemy would not know that this was the Virgin of whom Isaiah prophesied: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb" (Is. 7:14). St. Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria, bears witness to this[2] in the following words:

1. St. Gregory of Nyssa, brother of St. Basil the Great, bishop of the city of Nyssa in Cappadocia, one of the most renowned Fathers of the Church of the fourth century, known for his zealous struggle against Arianism and for his many writings, theological, philosophical and homiletic, of which the most remarkable are the following: the Great Catechetical Discourse, in which the holy Father presents a model of how to persuade Jews and pagans of the truth of Christianity; a dialogue on the soul and the resurrection between St. Gregory and his sister, the Venerable Macrina, after the death of their brother, St. Basil the Great; then many works against various heretics and a number of homilies and sermons on Holy Scripture. St. Gregory died in 394. The Church commemorates him on January 10.

"Joseph was to serve the mystery, so that the Virgin, as if having a husband, might be held in honor[3], and so that the very truth of the matter might remain hidden from the devil, that he might not know what was to come to pass, in what manner God was pleased to dwell with men" (Homily on the Nativity of Christ). And St. Basil the Great[8689] says: "The betrothal to Joseph was accomplished in order to conceal from the prince of this age (that is, the devil) the Incarnation of the Son of God" (Homily on the Nativity of Christ). St. John of Damascus[4] says the same: "Joseph is betrothed to Mary as a husband, so that the devil, not knowing of the Nativity of Christ from a Virgin without a husband, might withdraw, that is, cease to stir up Herod and to incite the Jews to envy. For from the very time when Isaiah prophesied that 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear' (Is. 7:14), the devil watched closely over all maidens, lest any of them should conceive without a husband and bear while remaining a virgin. God's providence arranged the betrothal of the Virgin Mary to Joseph, so that the virginity of the Most Pure Theotokos and the Incarnation of God the Word might be hidden from the prince of darkness." Even before the completion of the marital mystery, the Most Pure Virgin Mary was found to have conceived of the Holy Spirit, and her holy womb, which contained the uncontainable God, continued to grow. Her pregnancy became especially evident when, after her three-month stay with Elizabeth, she returned to her house (Lk. 1:56), and the divine Fruit within her grew with

2. St. Athanasius the Great, archbishop of Alexandria, the renowned champion of Orthodoxy against the Arian heresy, a valiant confessor and sufferer for the truth, who during his long administration of the Alexandrian Church endured five exiles, and at last, after many labors and persecutions, reposed in 373. He wrote much in defense of the Orthodox teaching concerning the Son of God. His most famous works are the following: "Against the Greeks" (Kata Hellenon), in which he refutes paganism; then many treatises directed against the teaching of Arius and in defense of the Orthodox teaching on the consubstantiality of the Son of God with God the Father. Also some interpretive works, for example his commentary on the Psalms and certain other writings. The Church commemorates St. Athanasius on May 2 and January 18.

3. It is known that among the Jews, before the appearance of the Messiah, virginity was rather held in reproach, and only marriage was regarded as a fully blessed state.

4. St. John of Damascus, first a governor of the city of Damascus, and afterwards a monk of the famous Jerusalem Lavra of St. Sabbas the Sanctified, a renowned defender of Orthodoxy against the iconoclastic heresy, author of the exact exposition of the Orthodox Faith (the first Dogmatics), and of many church hymns. He died at the end of the eighth century. His memory is celebrated on December 4.

each passing day, while the day of the Nativity of the Infant Christ drew ever nearer. Seeing this, Joseph was in great perplexity and sorrow, for he thought that she had broken her vow of virginity. In deep distress the righteous elder said: "How could this have come about? I have not known her, and I have not even sinned against her in thought, yet behold, she is with child. Alas, how did this happen? Who has seduced her? And what I am to do, I do not know. Should I denounce her as a transgressor of the law, or keep silent out of shame, which would then fall upon her and upon me? If I denounce her, she will surely be stoned according to the law of Moses, and I shall appear as a tormentor who delivered her to a cruel death. If I do not expose her, I shall be counted a partner of adulterers. What then am I to do? I am at a loss. I will release her secretly, and let her go wherever she wishes. Or I myself will go away from her to a distant land, so that my eyes may not see such reproach." Pondering thus, the righteous Joseph approached the Virgin Mary and said to her, as St. Sophronius of Jerusalem testifies: "Mary, what is this matter that I see in you? Dishonor in place of honor, sorrow in place of joy. Instead of boasting, you have brought me reproach. I took you from the priests in the church as one so blameless, and what do I see?"[5] And St. Athanasius of Alexandria relates the same thing thus: "Joseph, seeing that the Virgin Mary had a child in her womb, yet not knowing what great treasure was within her, questioned her in confusion: 'What has happened to you, Mary? Are you not the pure Virgin, reared in the sacred courts of the Temple? Are you not Mary, who did not wish to look upon the faces of men? Are you not Mary, whom the priests could not persuade to enter into marriage? Are you not Mary, who promised to keep the rose of virginity unfading? Where is the chamber of your chastity? Where is the room that guarded your virginal purity? Where is your modest countenance? I am ashamed, while you show boldness, since I conceal your sin.'" When Joseph said all this to her, how the blameless Lamb, the immaculate Dove, the chaste Virgin blushed and was ashamed at these words of Joseph! She did not dare to tell him of the good tidings that the

5. From the service of the Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ, troparion at the first royal hour.

Archangel had brought her, or of the prophecy that Elizabeth had uttered concerning her; she did not dare to do so because she feared to appear vainglorious and fond of praise. The aforementioned St. Athanasius also bears witness to this, placing in her mouth these words to Joseph: "If I Myself should tell you about myself, I shall seem vainglorious to you. Bear with me a little, Joseph, and the shepherds will reveal to you concerning Me." The Virgin Mary said only one thing to Joseph in reply to his perplexity: "As the Lord lives, who has kept Me to this day in virginal purity, for I have known no sin, no one has touched Me, and what is in Me is from the will of God and by God's action." Joseph, however, thought as a man thinks and suspected that her conception had come from sin. But being righteous, he did not wish to denounce her; instead he resolved to release her secretly, or (as the Syriac version has it) he determined to leave her in secret, that is, to go away from her somewhere far off. When he had conceived this thought, behold, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying: "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary, your wife." The Angel calls the Virgin the wife of Joseph in order to refute his thought of adultery (for Joseph supposed that Mary had conceived through adultery). The Angel was, as it were, saying to Joseph: "She is your betrothed wife, and belongs to no other husband." Of this the blessed Theophylact says thus: [6]

"The Angel calls Mary the wife of Joseph, thereby showing that she, who was betrothed to him, had not defiled herself with another. And also that lawful marriage might be honored together with virginity." Thus reasons St. Basil the Great as well: "The Angel called Mary both a Virgin and a woman betrothed to a man, in order to honor virginity and not condemn marriage. Virginity was chosen as necessary for the holy birth, while betrothal, which is the beginning of marriage, was performed according to the law, lest anyone think that the birth had come about through lawlessness; and also so that Joseph might be an ever-present witness to Mary's purity, that she might not be reproached as though she had defiled her virginity. She had, in the person

6. The Blessed Theophylact, archbishop of Ohrid in Bulgaria, known for his commentary on the Four Gospels, in which he follows in many respects St. John Chrysostom. He died about 1085.

of Joseph, a betrothed husband who was witness to and guardian of her life" (Homily on the Nativity of Christ). The Angel says to Joseph: "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife." These words mean: "Take your wife according to the betrothal, and a virgin according to her vow made to God" (thus explain St. Gregory of Nyssa and Blessed Jerome), "for she is the first virgin among the people of Israel who promised God to keep her virginity undefiled until her very end. But fear not, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name"—you shall give Him a name as a father, though you had no part in His birth, for it is customary for fathers to give names to their children, as Abraham also called his son Isaac (Gen. 21:2). So you, though not His natural father, but only His reputed father, shall serve Him as a father by giving Him a name." Blessed Theophylact thus speaks to Joseph in the Angel's words: "Though you had no part whatever in the birth of the Child, I wish to grant you this office—that of a father—so that you may also give Him a name. You shall give Him a name, although He is not your offspring; by this you shall do for Him what is proper to a father. And what is His name? Jesus, which means Savior, for He shall save His people from their sins." Joseph, rising from sleep, did as the Angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took his wife, who had been betrothed to him, the immaculate Virgin consecrated to the Lord by her vow of virginity, and the Mother of the Lord, who had conceived the Savior of the world of the Holy Spirit. He took her as his betrothed, lovingly rendering her great honor as the Lord's Virgin, and serving her with reverence and fear as the Mother of the Savior. "And knew her not till she had brought forth" (Mt. 1:25); that is, according to Theophylact's interpretation, he never knew her as a wife. For how could he, being righteous, know her, who had been given to him from the temple of the Lord not for marriage, but so that he might guard her virginity under the appearance of marriage? How could he touch the Virgin of the Lord, who had promised God perpetual virginity? How could he touch the Most Immaculate Mother of his Lord and Creator? And the Gospel's words "till she had brought forth" are a customary Scriptural expression, in which the word "till" is used of time without end. For David also says:

The Lord said unto my Lord, "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Ps. 109:1)[7]. This does not mean that the Lord, the Son, will sit at the right hand of the Lord, the Father, only until He has made His enemies His footstool; rather, even after His enemies have been subjected beneath His feet, the Lord, the Son, will sit yet more gloriously as Victor throughout the endless ages. Likewise, it is written of St. Joseph: "And knew her not till she had brought forth" (Mt. 1:25)—not in the sense that he was to know her afterward, as certain heretics thought[8], a teaching foreign to the Orthodox Church; but in the sense that, after the birth of such a Son, who was God incarnate, and after the great miracles that took place at His birth, of which Joseph was an eyewitness, this pious elder not only did not dare to touch her, but held her in profound honor as a servant honors her mistress, serving her as the Mother of God with fear and trembling. St. Theophylact speaks thus concerning the word "till": "Scripture customarily speaks in this way, as when it says of the flood: 'The raven did not return to the Ark until the waters had dried from the earth' (Gen. 8:7), though the raven did not return afterward either."[9]

And Christ says: "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Mt. 28:20). Will He not be with us after the end of the world? On the contrary, then He will be with us even more, throughout the endless ages. So here too it says "till she had brought forth," that is, Joseph knew not the Most Holy Virgin either before or after Christ's birth, just as the Lord will be with us unceasingly both throughout this age and after its end. And how could Joseph have touched the Most Pure Virgin after learning of the ineffable birth of the Savior from her?"

The immaculate virginity of the Most Pure Theotokos after the Savior's birth is clearly revealed also by this: when Joseph began to doubt

7. This psalm is one of the prophetic or messianic psalms, since it speaks of the triumph of the Messiah-Christ over His enemies and of the glorification of His holy humanity.

8. The heretics who denied the perpetual virginity of the Most Holy Virgin Theotokos were the following: first, the so-called Antidicomarianites in Arabia, in the fourth century, against whom St. Epiphanius of Cyprus wrote; then, at the end of the fourth century, Helvidius, the monk Jovinian, and the Bishop Bonosus of Sardica. Against Helvidius and Jovinian wrote Blessed Jerome.

concerning the Virgin who was with child, and even wondered whether she had been forcibly deprived of her virginity, the Angel appeared to him and called Mary his wife: "Fear not," he said, "to take unto thee Mary thy wife," thereby disproving his suspicion of adultery, as was said above. But when that same Angel appeared to Joseph in Bethlehem and in Egypt after the Nativity of Christ, when this righteous elder had already received a revelation of Mary's purity and of the God-Child, born of the Holy Spirit, the Angel no longer called the Most Pure Virgin Mary his wife, but only the Mother of the One who had been born; for thus it is written in the Gospel: "When they were departed, behold, the Angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young Child and His Mother" (and not "your wife"), "and flee into Egypt" (Mt. 2:13). And again in Egypt the Angel says to Joseph: "Arise, and take the young Child and His Mother, and go into the land of Israel" (Mt. 2:20), plainly showing thereby that he was directing Joseph not toward marriage, but toward service to the Child and His Mother. Thus Joseph not only did not know Mary as his wife until she had brought forth her firstborn Son, but even after the birth of the God-Child she remained an incorrupt Virgin, as all the great teachers of the Church unanimously testify.

It is also related[10] that at the time when the Most Holy Virgin Mary already had the Child in her womb, one of the scribes, named Annin, came to their house—after the Angel had appeared to Joseph—and, seeing the Virgin with child, hastened to the high priest and the whole Sanhedrin and said to them: "That carpenter Joseph, whom you called righteous, has committed a crime: he has secretly defiled and corrupted the Virgin who was given to him from the temple of the Lord to be kept, and now she is with child." The servants sent by the high priest went to Joseph's house and found Mary with child, as that scribe had told them. They took her together with Joseph and brought them to the

9. The Russian edition reads "But fear", evidently a misprint for "Fear not" (Matt. 1:20). —Trans.

10. This account is contained in the apocryphal Gospel of James (the so-called "Protevangelium of James"), in chapters 15 and 16. It is also repeated in many other apocryphal writings, for example in the "History of the Birth of Mary and the Childhood of the Savior," though with some variations.

high priest and the whole Sanhedrin. The high priest said to the Virgin Mary: "You have forgotten the Lord God, you who were brought up in the Holy of Holies, who received food from the hands of Angels and heard the singing of Angels! What is this that you have done?" She answered with weeping: "As the Lord my God lives, I am pure and have known no man." Then the high priest said to Joseph: "What is this that you have done?" He answered: "As the Lord my God lives, I am pure concerning her." The high priest said to him: "Since you did not bow your head beneath the mighty hand of God, so that your offspring might be blessed, and since you secretly mingled with a Virgin consecrated as a gift to the Lord, unknown to the sons of Israel, you must therefore drink with her the water of conviction[8696], that the Lord may reveal your sin before all."

God had established through Moses the following judgment, as it is written in the 4th Book of Moses (Numbers), in chapter 5: if any man or woman is suspected of adultery and does not reveal the truth concerning himself or herself, such a person was given to drink, in the temple of the Lord, the water of the oath, with special sacred observances and a prescribed rite. And by the judgment of God, after drinking it, a certain sign of conviction came upon the one who had committed adultery, and this sign revealed the lawlessness committed. With this very water, and according to the proper rite, the high priest made Joseph drink first, and Mary afterward; but no sign of conviction came upon her, so that the people marveled that their sin had not been revealed. Then the high priest said to them:

—If the Lord God has not revealed your sin, then go in peace.

And he dismissed them. Joseph took the Virgin Mary and went into his house, rejoicing and glorifying the God of Israel.

After this, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus[11] that a census be taken throughout the whole earth, and all went to be registered,

11. Augustus, the first Roman emperor (15 B.C. – A.D. 14). His full name was Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus Augustus. He was the son of Octavius and Atia, daughter of Julia, sister of Julius Caesar. The battle of Actium, in which he defeated Mark Antony, made him sole ruler of the vast Roman Empire. In his reign a census was carried out throughout the whole empire, the one spoken of in the Gospel narrative (Lk. 2:1), which prompted St. Joseph and the Most Holy Virgin Mary to go to Bethlehem.

each in his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. Bethlehem is a small town, not far from Jerusalem, lying to the south, on the road that leads into the hill country to Hebron, the priestly city, where the house of Zechariah stood, and where the Most Pure Virgin, after the Annunciation of the Archangel, visited and greeted Elizabeth, the mother of the Forerunner. Thus Bethlehem lies midway between Jerusalem and Hebron, and from Nazareth, the Galilean city, it is a distance of three days' journey or a little more. Bethlehem is called the City of David because David was born there and was anointed king there; there also Rachel died, and the tomb of Jesse, the father of David, is shown there (Gen. 35:19). The former name of Bethlehem was Ephrathah, but Jacob, when he pastured his flocks there, named the place House of Bread (Bethlehem), foreseeing in the Spirit and foretelling that in that place there should be born the Bread which came down from heaven (Jn. 6:51), Christ the Lord. And near Bethlehem, to the east, opposite the well of David, beside which he once suffered a great thirst and said, "Who will give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate?" (2 Kgdms. 23:15), there is a cave in the rocky mountain on which the city of Bethlehem is situated. Not far from this cave lay a field belonging to Salome, who was also a resident of Bethlehem and was a kinswoman both of the Virgin Mary and of Joseph.

And when Joseph drew near to the city, the Chaste Bride, who knew no marriage, came to the time of giving birth, and he began to seek a house for lodging, where the Mother who bore Him might find a suitable place to bring to light the blessed Fruit of Her womb. But he found no shelter for himself, on account of the multitude of people who had come to register, who had filled not only the common inn but the whole city. Therefore Joseph withdrew into the aforementioned cave, because there was no room for them in the inn, and the day was already drawing toward evening. That cave served as a shelter for cattle, and in it the Most Pure and Most Blessed Virgin, at the midnight hour, prayed fervently to God, and, wholly absorbed in contemplation

of God and burning with desire for the Lord and with love for Him, bore without pain our Lord Jesus Christ, on the twenty-fifth day of December[12]. For it was fitting that She should give birth painlessly who had conceived without the sweetness of marriage; She had said that she knew no sweetness of wedlock and was not a partaker of it[13]. And since She had conceived in purity, so She also bore without pain, as Saint Gregory of Nyssa says: "A Virgin conceived, a Virgin bore in the womb, a Virgin gave birth, and a Virgin remained a Virgin; there has not yet been on earth a wonder like this" (Sermon on the Nativity of Christ). And Saint John of Damascus says: "A new wonder above all the ancient wonders: for who has ever known a mother bearing without a husband?"[14] Without a husband the Most Holy Virgin bore Christ, just as Adam produced Eve without a wife, of which Saint Chrysostom[15] speaks thus: "As Adam without a wife produced a wife, so here a Virgin without a husband bore a Man, thereby repaying to men the debt for Eve. Adam remained whole after the removal of a rib from his body, and the Virgin remained incorrupt after the birth of the Infant" (Sermon on the Nativity of Christ). And there was fulfilled that which was prefigured as in a shadow in the unburnt bush and in the Red Sea: "Likewise the bush was not consumed though it burned" (the Church sings), "so Thou didst bear, O Virgin, and Thou didst remain a Vir-

12. The tradition that the Nativity of Christ took place precisely on December 25 is very ancient. Already in the Apostolic Constitutions (Book V, ch. 12) it is said: "Keep, brethren, the festal days, and first of all the day of the Nativity of Christ, which let be celebrated by you on the 25th day of the tenth month (decembri)." And Clement of Alexandria in the second century points to December 25 as the day of the Nativity of Christ. However, in the first three centuries, when persecutions restricted the freedom of Christian worship, in some places of the East the feast of the Nativity of Christ was joined with the feast of the Theophany, in January. This practice continues among the Armenians to this day.

13. Stichera 2 of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos, at "Lord, I have cried."

14. Stichera at the Aposticha, Tone 2.

15. St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, the famous Father of the Church of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, who became renowned especially for his numerous preaching labors. For his extraordinary eloquence he received the name Chrysostom ("Golden-mouthed"). At first (and for most of his life) he served in the rank of presbyter in Antioch, and at the very end of the fourth century he occupied the see of the Archbishop of Constantinople. For this last period of his life he suffered many persecutions at the hands of the Empress Eudoxia, wife of the Emperor Arcadius, and he ended his life in exile, in Armenia (in 407). His memory is celebrated on November 13 and January 30. To him belongs the Liturgy which is celebrated in the Orthodox Church for the greater part of the year.

gin"[16]. And in another place: "The sea remained impassable; the Immaculate, after the birth of Emmanuel, remained incorrupt"[17]. Thus, without injury to Her virginity, the Ever-Virgin Mary bore the incarnate God. And this birth took place without the customary help and service of a midwife, as Saint Athanasius of Alexandria bears witness, when, discoursing upon the words of the Gospel, "And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger" (Lk. 2:7), he says thus: "Behold the mysterious birth of the Virgin: She Herself gave birth, and She Herself swaddled the Infant. With worldly women one gives birth and another swaddles, but it was not so with the Most Holy Virgin. She Herself gave birth, and She Herself swaddled, being Herself a painless mother and an untaught midwife; She did not permit anyone to touch with unclean hands the Most Pure Nativity: She Herself ministered to the One born of Her, and swaddled Him, and laid Him in the manger." Likewise Saint Cyprian says: "In the birth and after the birth the Virgin remained a Virgin by divine power — She who gave birth without pain and had no need of any services on the part of a midwife, but was Herself both mother and minister of the birth, and therefore offers to her Infant reverent care: She touches Him, embraces Him, kisses Him, gives Him the breast, and does all this joyfully, without any pain, without any weakness of nature customary at childbirth." Thus She Herself with Her virginal hands ministered to her incorrupt Nativity (the Divine Infant), while awaiting the elder Salome, Her kinswoman, whom Joseph went to call to serve the Most Holy Virgin. But Salome came when the work was already done, for She who gave birth was also She who ministered, carrying the Infant, swaddling Him and laying Him in the manger.

Saint Zeno, Hieromartyr and Bishop, further relates that the midwife, when she came, did not believe that the birth had been virginal and painless, and tried, by the usual methods of the obstetric art, to learn whether this birth was indeed such. But immediately a punishment struck her for her bold deed, for her hand, which had dared to perform that test, suddenly became severely inflamed with a fiery afflic-

16. Dogmatikon of Tone 2.
17. Dogmatikon of Tone 5.

tion and withered. When, however, the afflicted woman applied her hand to the Divine Infant, she was at once healed and became as sound as she had been before. Then Salome believed that the Mother is a Virgin and the Infant is God[18].

After this, the Immaculate Mother and extraordinary Minister to Her newborn Infant, having swaddled Her sweetest Child in white, clean, fine linen swaddling-clothes, prepared beforehand for this purpose and brought from Nazareth, and having laid Him in the manger which was in the same cave, bowed down to Him as to God and her Creator, of which the blessed Joseph the Hymnographer[19] reminds us when he addresses the Most Holy Virgin with these words: "Holding in Thy hands the Incarnate One, O Maiden, clothed in the likeness of man, and bowing down and kissing Him as a mother: 'My Child,' Thou didst say, 'sweetest, thus do I hold Thee, who holdest all creation in Thy hand.'"[20] It is certain that the God-bearing Maiden bowed down to the earth before Him Who was born of Her and lay in the manger, while the Angelic orders invisibly surrounded them with wonder.

And beside the manger there were tied an ox and an ass, that the Scripture might be fulfilled: The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib (Is. 1:3). These ox and ass had been brought by Joseph from Nazareth. The ass had been brought for the sake of the Virgin, who was with child, that she might be carried upon it during the journey; and the ox Joseph had brought that he might sell it and pay the due tribute ordered by the emperor, and also buy for himself what was necessary. These two dumb animals, standing by the manger, warmed the Infant with their breath, on account of the wintry season of that time, and thus served their Lord and Creator[21]. And Joseph bowed down both to the Newborn and to His Mother, for he then recognized

18. This narrative is taken from the "Protevangelium of James."

19. Venerable Joseph the Hymnographer, composer of canons, a native of Sicily, and afterward an ascetic of one Thessalonian monastery. During the iconoclastic persecution under the Emperor Leo the Armenian, he suffered much for Orthodoxy. Under another iconoclast emperor, Theophilus, he was exiled to Cherson, from where he was recalled by the Empress Theodora. He reposed in 883. His memory is celebrated on April 4. He composed many hymns, especially many canons (about 48).

20. The service of the forefeast of the Nativity of Christ, December 23, the Triode at Vespers, Ode 9.

that what was born of her was of the Holy Spirit, as St. Athanasius also says: "Truly Joseph knew her not until she had borne her firstborn Son; so long as the Virgin bore within her that which was conceived of her, Joseph knew her not, he knew not what was in her, he knew not what was taking place in her. But when she had given birth, then he knew; then Joseph came to know concerning the Virgin what her power was, and what she had been deemed worthy to become. Then he knew, when he saw the Virgin nourishing with her breasts and at the same time keeping the incorrupt bloom of virginity. Then he knew, when the Virgin gave birth but did not experience what is proper to women in childbed. Then he knew that the unhewn stone gave suck to the spiritual Stone[22]. Then Joseph knew what Isaiah had written of her: Behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb." These words of St. Athanasius attest that at that time Joseph came to know the power of the mystery, and, knowing it, bowed down with fear and joy, giving thanks to God incarnate, who had made him worthy to be an eyewitness and servant of this mystery. Concerning the time of the Nativity of Christ, many trustworthy writers say that it was midnight, following the Sabbath and preceding Sunday, and this account agrees with the Sixth Ecumenical Council[23], which explains the celebration of Sunday thus: "For on that day God created light; on that same day the Lord was pleased to be born; on that same day He received baptism in the Jordan from John; on that same day our most merciful Redeemer, for the sake of our salvation, rose from the dead; on that same day He also poured out the Holy Spirit upon His disciples." For as, according to trustworthy report, He was conceived in the virginal womb at the Annunciation on a Friday and suffered on a Friday, so He was born on

21. This narrative is likewise drawn from the apocryphal Gospels. For example, it can be found in the "History of the Childhood of the Savior."

22. In these words, evidently, two passages of Holy Scripture are meant: Dan. 2 (where the holy prophet Daniel explains to King Nebuchadnezzar his dream about the image, and where the uncut mountain, from which the stone was torn without hands, prefigured the Most Holy Virgin and the supernatural birth of Christ from Her), and also 1 Cor. 10:4 (where the Apostle Paul [calls Christ] the Rock).

23. The Sixth Ecumenical Council was convened in 680, in the reign of the Emperor Constantine Pogonatus, against the heresy of the Monothelites, who taught of one will in the incarnate Christ the Savior, and it condemned this heresy. The Council took place in Constantinople.

Sunday and rose on Sunday. And it was fitting for Christ to be born on the day on which God said: Let there be light (Gen. 1:3); and on which there was light (Gen. 1:3); on the same day it was fitting that He Himself, the eternal Light, should shine forth to the world. That Christ was to be born at night and at a known hour of it was foretold prophetically in the Book of the Wisdom of Solomon, where it is said thus: "For while all things were in quiet silence, and night was in the midst of her course, thine almighty word leapt down from heaven out of thy royal throne as a fierce man of war into the midst of a land of destruction" (Wis. 18:14–15)[24]. Great wonders also took place throughout the universe at the Nativity of Christ. Thus, at the very hour in which our Lord came forth through the virginal gates sealed with purity, suddenly in that cave a spring of water gushed forth from the rock, and in Rome a spring of oil came forth from the earth and flowed into the river Tiber. The idol temple called eternal collapsed; the idols were shattered, and there appeared in the sky three suns. And in Spain on the same night a cloud brighter than the sun appeared; in the land of Judea the vineyards of Engaddi blossomed, despite the winter season[25]. Especially wondrous was what is described in the Gospel, when the Angels came down from heaven with singing and clearly appeared before men. It happened thus. Opposite the cave in which Christ was born, according to the testimony of Blessed Jerome, there stood a very high tower called Eder, in which the shepherds of the flocks dwelt. There, on that night, three of them chanced to be awake and keeping watch over their flock, and behold, the chief of the heavenly powers, the Angel (who, according to the opinion of St. Cyprian, was the holy messenger Gabriel) appeared to them in great radiance, shining with heavenly glory, which illumined them also; seeing him, they were greatly

24. This passage from the Book of Wisdom of Solomon (Wis. 18:14–15) refers, properly speaking, to that night when, by the almighty action of God, the firstborn of Egypt were struck, while the firstborn of the Hebrews were spared by the Destroying Angel. St. Demetrius cites this passage as a prophecy of the blessed night of the Nativity of Christ, probably on the ground that, just as that (Egyptian) night was salvific for the people of God, so this (Bethlehem) night brought salvation to all men.

25. Probably these narratives were borrowed by St. Demetrius of Rostov from Western accounts of the Nativity of Christ, some of which passed also into our old Russian manuscript and printed collections.

frightened. But the Angel who had appeared, bidding them lay aside fear and not be afraid, announced to them the joy that had come to the whole world through the Nativity of the Savior. At the same time he indicated to them a sign of the truth of his announcement: "You shall find," he said, "an Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." While the Angel was saying this, there was suddenly heard in the air the singing of a multitude of heavenly hosts, glorifying God and chanting: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Lk. 2:12–14). After this Angelic appearance and the singing of the heavenly powers, the shepherds, having consulted with one another, went hastily to Bethlehem to see whether the Angel's words were true; and they went and saw the Most Pure Virgin Mary the Theotokos, and St. Joseph, her betrothed, and the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in the manger. And believing without doubt that this was Christ the Lord, the expected Messiah, who had come to save the human race, they bowed down to Him and told all that they had seen and heard, and what the Angel had said to them concerning this Infant. And all who heard (Joseph, Salome, and those who had come there at that time) marvelled at the words of the shepherds; but the Most Pure Virgin Mother, who had given birth without pain, kept all these words, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God. Thus was accomplished the Nativity of Jesus Christ, our Lord, to Whom from us sinners also be honor and glory, worship and thanksgiving, with His unbeginning Father and with the Eternal Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Troparion, Tone 4:

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath shone the light of knowledge upon the world; for therein they that worshipped the stars were taught by a star to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Orient from on high. O Lord, glory to Thee.

Kontakion, Tone 3:

Today the Virgin giveth birth to the Transcendent One, and the earth offereth a cave to the Unapproachable; Angels with shepherds

glorify Him, and Magi journey with a star; for our sake the Eternal God was born as a young Child.

* * *

Word on the Nativity of Christ

Слово на Рождество Христово

The heavenly messenger gives the shepherds of Bethlehem such a sign of the coming of the Savior into the world: an Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. For he says to them thus: "You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Lk. 2:11–12). Perhaps someone will think that it is no great sign to see a swaddled infant, for every newborn child is customarily wrapped. It would be a great sign if the Angel, as a witness and for the clear confirmation of the Nativity of Christ, had shown something unusual, as, for example, a star in the east to the Magi, or as the Sibyl[26] showed to Augustus a maiden holding an infant in her arms in the sun. But if anyone will look with the spiritual eye into the mysteries accomplished in that swaddled Infant, he will see and know that the sign indicated by the Angel to the shepherds, a swaddled Infant lying in a manger, is a great sign. For this Infant is He whose Nativity opened to the world the light of the knowledge of God, brighter than the stars and the sun; His swaddling bands are wider than the clouds, His manger more spacious than the heavens, for in it lay Christ God, who cannot be contained. Let us then turn our mental gaze to the infancy of Christ. For He who created the ages and from eternity prepared our salvation, this One appeared on earth as an infant, that He might renew the decrepitude of our nature: "You shall find," said the Angel, "an Infant."

Perhaps someone might be of the opinion that Christ ought to have come into the world not as an infant but as a giant, according to the prophecy of David, who foretold of the coming of the Messiah thus:

26. The Sibyls were prophetesses among the pagans. To some of them, for example the Cumaean Sibyl, the Erythraean Sibyl, and others, ancient Christian writers attributed prophecies both about the Savior and generally about the times of the New Testament.

"And it, as a bridegroom, cometh forth from his chamber" (Ps. 18:6) (that is, from the womb of the Most Pure Virgin), "rejoiceth as a giant to run the race" (Ps. 18:6).[27] Therefore the Angel may also say: you will find an infant, and not a giant. But if we reflect upon the infancy of Christ, we shall find another reason for the Angel's words. As the Nativity of Christ was not like the ordinary birth of a human being, but was extraordinary and supernatural, so His infancy was unusual and unlike the infancy of other infants. All newborn infants are feeble and without understanding; they have no strength and can do nothing until, after a long time of growing, strength and reason begin to appear in them and grow with them. But this newborn Infant, our Lord Jesus Christ, is born both with strength and with reason. Therefore the Angel points to such an Infant, who is born both with invincible power and with ineffable wisdom, as to a wonder unique in its kind and never yet seen in the world. As for His invincible might and strength, the Church has not passed over this at today's feast, when it sings together with the prophet Isaiah: "The mighty God, the Ruler, the Prince of Peace" (Is. 9:6). It is said somewhere that the lion is known by its claws. Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, reveals Himself from His very youth (that is, from His infancy), "as the Lord is strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle" (Ps. 23:8). Let us consider how great is the might and strength of the newborn Infant. As soon as the news of His Nativity began to spread, "Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him" (Mt. 2:3). The Infant does not yet speak, and already He strikes fear into those who have set their names upon the earth; He is still in swaddling clothes, and already He has filled tyrants with terror; He is still in the manger, and already He has shaken him who sits on the royal throne.

One of the most skilled physicians relates that those who are to be great in the world, illustrious and famous, or kings and brave warriors, are, according to him, wont from their very youth (that is, from infancy) to foreshadow their future power and their future deeds. The

27. Literally this passage from Ps. 18 refers to the sun, which the Psalmist compares to a bridegroom and a giant coming out of his chamber. St. Demetrius sees here a prophetic indication of the appearance of the Messiah-Christ in the world.

same physician says that Pericles[28] had not yet been born when he already terrified the Greeks with dreams; Alexander[29] had not yet been born when he was already called by all the son of Jupiter[30] and lord of a kingdom. And elsewhere it is recorded that ants carried grains of wheat and laid them in the mouth of Midas, king of Phrygia,[31] when he was still an infant, as he slept, thereby foreshadowing his future countless riches. So also our King and Lord, the Infant newly born today, shows, even in His childhood, clear indications of His future power and deeds. The sign that gold, frankincense and myrrh are brought to Him from the most distant lands, by His appointment, points to the riches that are prepared for those who love Him. The fact that He troubles and disturbs Herod and all Jerusalem foreshadows His future victory over death and the devil and His triumph over all hell. The authority over the visible and invisible world, which will be granted to His humanity, and of which He will say in its time, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Mt. 28:18), is foreshadowed by the fact that, by His will, Angels and shepherds serve His Nativity, and the eastern kings worship Him, according to the prophecy of David: "And all kings of the earth shall worship him" (Ps. 71:11). For this prophecy has indeed been fulfilled, when He, as King of kings, was honored with worship and gifts from three earthly kings. The Bishop of the Church of Hippo, Blessed Augustine,[32] speaks of this beautifully thus: "Such are the signs of Thy Nativity, O Lord Jesus: before the waves of the sea are smoothed beneath Thy feet, when Thou shalt walk upon the sea; before the winds fall silent at Thy command; before the dead rise at Thy word; before the sun is darkened at the moment of Thy death, and the earth quakes at Thy resurrection from the tomb, and the heav-

28. Pericles, the well-known statesman of ancient Athens, who lived in the fifth century B.C.
29. That is, the famous Alexander the Great, the renowned conqueror of almost the whole East, who lived in the fourth century B.C.
30. Jupiter or Zeus, the chief deity of the ancient Greeks and Romans (Jupiter is his Roman name; Zeus or Zeves is the Greek name).
31. Midas, a semi-mythical Phrygian king, about whom many legendary accounts have been preserved.
32. Blessed Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, the famous Father of the Western Church, who left many writings on dogmatic questions, as well as many interpretations of various books and of individual passages of Holy Scripture. He reposed in 430.

ens open at Thine ascension; before all this and other wondrous things Thou shalt perform, Thou art still carried in a Mother's arms, and at the same time art revealed as the Lord of the whole world." Such are the might and strength of the newborn Infant, our Lord Jesus Christ, that even in His childhood He clearly reveals Himself as the Almighty Lord: "God's strength is great; truly the power of God is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). For in the small and feeble infant limbs we see the great power of Jesus Christ, to which the Church points when it likens the born Lord to a lamb, and calls Him a Lamb, glorifying Him in the sessional hymn of the worship of the shepherds with these words: "Seeing Him, as a spotless lamb, nourished in the womb of Mary, let us sing and say: Rejoice, O Mother of the Lamb and the Shepherd."[33]

Here Christ, born of the Virgin, is both likened to a lamb and named a lamb. But what strength is there in a lamb, what power? A power truly unconquerable, as we see from what follows. Once John the Theologian beheld in his revelation various beasts and serpents coming forth from various places, from the sea, from the abyss and from the wilderness, with many terrible heads and open mouths full of deadly poison, and whose very appearance was most dreadful! All of them rise against one Lamb, as Scripture says: "they shall make war with the Lamb" (Rev. 17:14). Perhaps, looking at this struggle of those serpents and beasts with the Lamb, someone might think that even one of the weakest beasts will at once seize and tear the Lamb, so that the greater beasts will have no one left to fight. But behold the power of the Lamb: He is so firmly armed against them that all that beastly strength suddenly, at His action, falls and sinks into the earth, as it is written: "the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings" (Rev. 17:14). Oh, truly this is the great power of the Lamb! This Lamb signifies the Son of God; and the serpents and beasts signify demons and their servants. Here is a matter worthy of reflection: why did the Angel, having shown under these images the struggle of the Son of God with His enemies, not name Him by His true name, brought from

33. Oikos 4.

heaven at the Annunciation to the Most Pure Virgin and given at the circumcision? Why did he not say, "These will make war with Jesus Christ," but said, "These will make war with the Lamb"? Truly, because already in His Nativity, without waiting to be given a name, He casts down His enemies. Though He still rests as a lamb on the hay, already He breaks the spiritual serpents and beasts like a reed, crushing them like earthen vessels. It is well written in the prophecy: "And they named him Maher-shalal-hash-baz; for before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and My mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried before the king of Assyria" (Is. 8:3–4).[34] This newborn Lamb does not wait for the time when He will become a lion, and it will be said of Him: this Conqueror is the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5). This Infant does not wait for the time when He will grow in strength like a giant. This Child does not await the time when His young limbs will receive strength like Samson's.[35] But before He begins to suckle the breasts of His Mother, He overcomes His enemies. Before He is able to pronounce with His lips His own name or the name of His Most Pure Mother, He blots out of the book of life the names of the unworthy. Before this Infant begins, as He grows, to acquire manly strength, He casts the mighty from their thrones: "the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings" (Rev. 17:14). Such is the might of our Lamb, such is the invincible power of the Divine Infant with which He is born!

He is born together with understanding, for He who possesses might and power in His infancy possesses understanding as well. “Great is our Lord, and great is His strength; and His understanding is infinite” (Ps. 146:5). Is there any infant to whom it would be fitting to apply the following words: “I have more understanding than the aged”

34. Here is set forth the command given by the Lord to the prophet Isaiah, that he should give his son the name "Speedy spoil, hasty prey" (Slavonic, in the Hours on Christmas Eve). Such a name was to serve for the prophet's contemporaries as a sign of the swift victory of the Jewish people over the Syrian and Israelite kingdoms. Some interpreters see in this mysterious naming of the prophet's son a kind of prefiguration of the glory and might of the Messiah. In this sense St. Demetrius cites it at this place.

35. Samson, one of the judges of Israel, known for his extraordinary strength. The history of Samson is set forth in Judg. 13; Judg. 14; Judg. 15; Judg. 16.

(Ps. 118:100)? These words may be applied only to the Divine Infant. Ordinary infants understand nothing when they are born, until the time of their growth; and even as they grow, they must be taught in order to understand. But this Divine Infant, just as before His Nativity He was Wisdom itself, so in His Nativity He is the depth of wisdom and the understanding of Divinity (Rom. 11:33). In His infancy He is subject to the conditions of time, but in His Wisdom He is before all time. A Child is born for us, and God was seen by the Prophet Daniel under the likeness of the Ancient of Days—that is, of a very old man (Dan. 7:9–13)[36]—a Child, and (at the same time) a Father, as the Prophet Isaiah declares today, on His Nativity: "The Father of the age to come" (Is. 9:6). The name "Father" is fitting not for children, but for men; and no one has ever called an infant nourished at his mother's breast a father. Nevertheless, the Prophet unhesitatingly calls Christ, who was born, a father. Why? To show that in that deified Infant there is the same understanding and the same wisdom as in the Father who is Ancient of Days. As a most wise father treats his children, so does this Heavenly Infant, born of the Most Pure Theotokos, deal with us. And by this sign we are assured that the Savior has been born for us today: for in His infancy He appears to us as a father. How does He become a father to us? Let us hear how this comes to pass: as He Himself is born, so at the same time He also gives us new birth from death unto life, just as the father in the Gospel did for the prodigal son, who had been dead and then came to life. That father, in order to restore his dead son to life, fell upon his neck and kissed him. This paternal kiss was a sign to the son that his sins, which had caused his spiritual death, were forgiven; for death comes through sin. And when these sins, the causes of death, had been taken away from the sinner through forgiveness, the dead man came to life at once. For just as day comes after night, so, when the dark death of sin is removed from a man, the grace of God begins to shine, and this is life for the soul. Truly, it is so: Christ our Savior kissed us at His Nativity; us, who were dead in our sins, He restored to life by His grace, and thus in His infancy He appears to us as

36. Old age was a symbol of the eternity of God. In this place St. Demetrius, calling the Infant God "Ancient of Days," wishes to indicate His pre-eternal existence as God.

a wise father. And that we may understand that Christ our Savior kissed us at His Nativity, let us consider how, in the book of the Song of Songs, a certain God-loving person expresses so ardent a desire for union with God: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!" (Song 1:1)[37]. Do we wish to know who it is that desires God's kiss? Let us hear St. Ambrose[38], who says that it is our nature, our flesh, that desires, through the Incarnation of the Son of God, to attain to God's love and nearness to God, so that it might behold Him as though face to face and kiss Him as though mouth to mouth, with a holy kiss. This teacher speaks thus of the matter: "Let us understand that (the God-loving person in the Song of Songs) is that flesh which, in the person of Adam, was moistened with the serpent's poison and was putrefying with the stench of sin. Having learned from many prophecies that God would come, who, having brought the serpent's deceit to naught, would pour forth the grace of the Holy Spirit, it prays, saying: 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!'" And St. Chrysostom speaks thus on behalf of the Church gathered from the pagans: "I, the Church from among the pagans, desire not so much that He speak with me through Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other Prophets, as that He Himself converse with me. Let Him, then, appear Himself, and I shall speak with Him mouth to mouth. Let Him come and kiss me with the kisses of His mouth. I hear Jeremiah saying of Him: 'The heart (of man) is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; and who can know it?' (Jer. 17:9)[39]. I desire Him Himself, that He may appear and kiss me with the kisses of His mouth. I hear Amos proclaiming of Him: 'Behold, a Man stood upon a wall of adamant, and in His hand was adam-

37. The passage cited is taken from Song 1:1, in which the bride, ardently desiring to receive the kiss of her bridegroom, represents the human race, ardently longing to behold the Savior sooner and to receive salvation from Him.

38. St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, who had, we may say, the same significance for the Western half of the Universal Church as St. Basil the Great for the Eastern; for St. Ambrose, like St. Basil, was especially renowned as a zealous champion and defender of Orthodoxy against Arianism. He left many writings, partly explaining the Word of God, partly setting forth the teaching of the faith, partly instructing in Christian virtues. St. Ambrose reposed in 397. His memory is celebrated on December 7.

39. Here the indicated prophecy of Jeremiah is taken as a representation of the incomprehensibility of the Incarnation of the Son of God.

ant' (Amos 7:7)[40]. But I seek Him Himself, that He may come and kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." From these words of the holy teachers it is clearly revealed that God's kiss with our nature is the Incarnation of the Son of God. For just as in a kiss mouth is joined to mouth, so in the Savior's Incarnation the divine nature was joined to human nature and united with it. Thus, at His Nativity, Christ our Savior, as a father, kissed us, as David foretold when he said: "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. 84:11). In this passage the commentator Euthymius (Zigabenus) understands "peace" to mean the divine nature, for God alone is the righteous Judge, and "righteousness" to mean the human nature in Christ, on account of the true meekness inherent in this nature. These two natures are said to have kissed one another because in Christ they possess close union, harmony, and concord.[41]

Truly, through this kiss, Christ our Savior, in His Nativity, regenerated us from the death of sin to the life of Divine grace. In the Fourth Book of Kings (4 Kgdms. 4:28–30, 34–35) the following is read. When the Shunammite woman asked the prophet Elisha, who was dwelling on Mount Carmel, that he should enter her house and raise her dead son, the prophet did not go at once himself, but first sent his servant Gehazi with his staff, that he should lay the staff upon the face of the child. But the dead child did not utter a voice and did not heed Gehazi. When the prophet himself came to the dead child, he laid his mouth upon the child's mouth and breathed upon him, and behold, the child opened his eyes. Observe how life was given to the dead child through the prophet's mouth being laid upon the child's mouth, as happens in a kiss. Truly there was a kiss there, when the lips were joined to the lips of the child, and through the kiss of those lips the dead one rose again. This was a prefiguring of the Incarnation of Christ. Death, entering the world through sin, seized the first child, Adam, who had scarcely begun to live. Human nature, as a woman, cries out to God

40. In the prophecy of Amos cited here, the holy Father sees a prediction of the Divine might of the Messiah.

41. Euthymius Zigabenus (or Zygadenus), a Constantinopolitan monk of the first half of the twelfth century, a well-known dogmatist and interpreter of Holy Scripture. In his interpretations he is not an independent writer, but only a compiler of earlier patristic interpretations.

with tender feeling: "Lord, bow down the heavens and come down" (Ps. 143:5); "Let Thy face shine, and we shall be saved" (Ps. 79:4). The Lord God does not come Himself at once, but, as Elisha sent his servant, so the Lord first sends His servants, the prophets, with the staff of the Law, that they should lay this staff upon the child, upon the race of Adam; but this child had not yet revived, for men still dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death.[42] When the Lord Himself came in His Incarnation and, as is said, laid the lips of His Divinity upon the lips of mankind, and kissed us with the kiss of His lips, the child at once arose, and the dead one came to life (*Resurrectional Theotokion before the Great Doxology*). From death we were regenerated to life in the Nativity of Christ. This is like an ancient tale. A good friend, seeing that his beloved friend had been wounded by a poisoned sword of an enemy, diligently cares how he might heal him of the deadly wound. But the physicians tell him that the wound is incurable, for the sword, steeped in poison, not only pierced the flesh and made a great wound, but by the same poison harmed the whole body, so that death in every case awaits his friend, unless someone should ransom him with his own health in this manner: let him lay his lips to the wound and suck out the poison from it. "Then your friend," the physicians say, "would easily receive healing, but he who sucked out the poison would in every case die." Hearing this, the true lover of friends, although his own life was not bitter to him, nevertheless, loving his friend more than himself and preferring his friend's health to his own life, healed his friend in the aforementioned manner: through laying his lips to the wound he sucked out the poison, and by his own death granted his companion health. In like manner our Lord God has done with us, wounded by the poisoned sword of sin of the infernal warrior. No one could heal us of the wound and deliver us from death unless first the deadly harm was taken away from us. There was no physician so perfect until He Himself, the Most High, Who sits upon the Cherubim, the perfect Physician and Creator of souls and bodies, laid His lips, that is, His Son. For as the Holy Spirit is called in Scripture the Finger of the Father: "By the finger of God,"

42. Cf. Lk. 1:79.

says the Lord, "I cast out devils" (Lk. 11:20), so God the Son is named the Mouth of the Father, as it is written: "By the breath of His mouth are all their hosts" (Ps. 32:6). Thus, I say, the Lord God laid His lips, that is, His beloved Son, out of love for the human race, upon the wound of our nature: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son" (Jn. 3:16). What lips do I mean? God the Son, uniting Himself to our wounded nature, took upon Himself that sinful poison; He who took the sins of the world upon Himself bore our sins and healed us, laying down His own health for us. Through this He regenerated us to a life of grace through His kiss, that is, through the Incarnation, and thus in His infancy He showed Himself as our Savior, our wise Father, our skillful Physician, and our most beloved Friend. Look, then, at the infancy of Christ, how Christ is born: both with invincible power and with incomprehensible wisdom. And rightly the Angel points the shepherds to the sign of the Savior's coming into the world: a Child, and a Child unusual and unlike other children in His birth: a Child strong and wise, a Babe mighty and wise. Behold the sign: you will find a Child, and a Child wrapped in swaddling clothes, for the swaddling clothes of that Child are full of mysteries. St. Ambrose says: "Christ is swaddled in bands, that you may be unwrapped from the mortal rags. In this lies the mystery of Christ's swaddling bands, that we may be stripped of the coarse rags of corruption in which death has clothed us." Let us consider carefully the words of Ambrose. Why did he not say "of one rag," but "you may be unwrapped from rags"? I think he here means the rags of Adam, for Adam, after his fall, had two garments: one of leaves and one of skin. The leafy one was in paradise, which Adam and Eve made for themselves: "they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons" (Gen. 3:7). And the garment of skin was outside paradise, when God made for Adam and his wife "coats of skins" and clothed them in these garments (Gen. 3:21). Both of these garments were mortal, for even those leaves were from the tree that brought death to man; for some of the teachers of the Church hold that the tree from whose fruit Adam was forbidden to eat was a fig tree. And the skin was from a slain beast. The leafy garment signified Adam's disobedience, through which he fell away from God as

a leaf from a tree, and the garment of skin was a sign of carnal love, or mindless lust. But Christ, the new Adam, was swaddled in bands to free man from both garments, namely from disobedience and from mindless desires, for His holy swaddling bands mysteriously represent both obedience and purity: they represent obedience, as the aforementioned teacher of the Church, St. Ambrose, explains.

"Look upon the mystery," he says: "from a virgin's womb came forth both a servant and (at the same time) the Lord: a servant, to serve, for he who girds himself with swaddling bands girds himself for service; but the Lord, to reign. Good is that service which won Him a name that is above every name, for what is dishonor to others is glory to Christ." Let us attend to these words: He who girds himself with swaddling bands girds himself for service. Thus obedience to Christ is signified by the swaddling bands, since one who acts and serves is a novice. And it is fitting for a novice to gird himself, according to the command of a certain master in the Gospel: "Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me" (Lk. 17:8). And our Lord took upon Himself the station of a novice, for He says of Himself: "They shall not come to serve Me, but I will serve them"[43]; He girds Himself with swaddling bands in order to serve us, according to the Gospel word: "Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Lk. 12:37). And by that service of His as a servant He heals Adam's disobedience. The old Adam was disobedient, but the new Adam was "obedient unto death" (Phil. 2:8). Thus, by the swaddling bands of Christ's obedience, the rags of Adam's disobedience are loosed.

As for purity, we shall also behold it mystically portrayed in the Lord's swaddling bands, if we consider why the old Adam was clothed in a garment of skins, while the new Adam was wrapped in linen (as is reliably known) swaddling bands, prepared beforehand by the Most Pure Theotokos. It often happens among men that outward clothing accords with a man's inward thought and character, so that his inner heart is

43. Cf. Mt. 20:28; Mk. 10:46.

plainly revealed through his outward dress (2 Cor. 4:16). The proud Herod[44] clothed himself in royal apparel on the day named in the Acts of the Apostles; and did not this apparel accord with his inward arrogance? It surely did, as Scripture says: "sitting upon his throne" (before the people, in pride), "and making an oration unto them" (Acts 12:21). His inward pride was plainly revealed by his outward, proud attire. The humble and God-fearing Queen Esther[45] also once, at the time appointed for this purpose, put on the insignia of royal dignity, not from pride, but because of the danger threatening the Jewish people; and after three days, when she had finished praying, she took off her garments of mourning and put on her festive garments (Esth. 4–5). Did these latter garments of hers not accord with her radiant soul and her good and pure intention? Surely they did, as Scripture says: "and being now glorious, she called upon God the beholder and savior of all" (Esth. 5:1), so that her outward beauty accorded with her inward, spiritual beauty.

Let us remember Adam also. When he sinned in Paradise, he became, as it were, a wild beast: a beast, because he had stolen the forbidden fruit; wild, because then he began to run and hide, like a beast in the wilderness. His beast-like disposition should therefore have been matched by a beast's garment of skins, so that his inward character and outward clothing might accord with one another. St. Gregory of Nyssa understands this in the same way (in his *Life of Moses*), and says thus concerning it: "Let those wear the skins of beasts who, by their beast-like disposition within, have disfigured the soul."

Understand why the old Adam was in rags, and why the new Adam,

44. That is, Herod Agrippa, who received from the Roman emperor Caligula the governance of Judea. In order to please the Jews, he raised a persecution against Christians and executed the holy Apostle James, son of Zebedee, and imprisoned the Apostle Peter, from which prison the holy apostle was miraculously delivered by an Angel. The death of Herod Agrippa took place soon after he appeared publicly in Caesarea, in the square, in royal apparel, and when flatterers began to call him a god (see Acts 12:21–23).

45. Esther, a pious Jewess who became the wife of the Persian king Ahasuerus (probably Artaxerxes Longimanus) and saved her people from the slaughter which the wicked courtier Haman had planned against this people. This is described in the Book of Esther.

Christ, is wrapped in linen swaddling bands. Linen, according to the testimony of Gregory and Isidore,[46] is in Holy Scripture an image of purity; for this reason, in the Old Testament the priestly garments, too, were made of linen, as a sign of the blameless and pure service of the priests. Blessed Jerome agrees with this; in his letter to Fabiola,[47] he says: "When, preparing to clothe ourselves in Christ, we put off the garments of skins, then we put on a linen garment, which has no defilement in it, but is pure in all things." Linen clothing is appointed as a sign of purity; but, O, how pure is Christ our Savior! "Innocent are his hands, and pure in heart; he shall do no sin, and deceit is not found in his mouth" (Ps. 23:4; Ps. 31:2). He is so pure that the very purest and brightest stars are dimmed before His purity, according to Scripture: "the stars are not pure in his sight" (Job 25:5). And for such a Most Pure Infant, born of the Most Pure Virgin, a garment of skins, like that of a beast, was not fitting; rather, pure linen and white swaddling bands were fitting, so that inward and outward purity might accord with one another.

But this is not yet all that the swaddling bands signify. Why is Adam clothed in the skin of a beast, while Christ is clothed in linen swaddling bands? Skin is more closely joined to the body than anything else. It clings so firmly to the body that only with great effort can it be torn away from it, whereas linen knows no flesh; it exists of itself and has no such union with flesh. Herein lies the final reason why Adam was clothed in skins, and Christ in linen. Adam was fleshly: he loved flesh, flesh of his flesh, so much that he would not leave it even in the worst of circumstances—in provoking God to anger—but together with it, skin with flesh, he angered his Creator. Therefore the Lord clothed him in a fleshly garment of skins, as one "who minds the things of the flesh" (Rom. 8:5). Christ, though He appeared bearing flesh, was nevertheless above all flesh, being Himself the Source of purity. Therefore He was

46. Venerable Isidore of Pelusium, an Egyptian ascetic of the fifth century and author of two hundred letters in which he explains many passages of Holy Scripture. His memory is celebrated by the Church on February 4.
47. Fabiola, a noblewoman of Rome, a disciple of Blessed Jerome, with whom he corresponded.

wrapped in linen swaddling bands, which have no union with flesh; and by this He loosed the garment of skins that signifies love of the flesh and irrational lust.

Look upon the mystery of Christ's swaddling bands: these bands are plasters for our sinful wounds; they wipe the tears from our eyes; they bind us inseparably, bringing us into closer union with God and into perfect love for Him. The manger, too, in which the swaddled Infant lay, is not without a mystical meaning. Let us hear what blessed Theodoret says concerning it: "Look," he says, "upon the humble dwelling of Him Who enriches heaven; look upon the manger of Him Who sits upon the Cherubim; look upon His earthly poverty, pondering His heavenly riches. God, rich in mercy, became poor, that we might be enriched by His poverty; and the King of Heaven was laid in a manger, that we might learn His voluntary poverty and humility." And St. Cyprian says: "He is laid in a manger so that, having changed our brutish manner of life, we may feed not upon hay (the pleasures of sin), but upon the heavenly bread." And Theodoret says further: "The Word of God is laid in a manger, that both the rational and the irrational (that is, the righteous and the sinful) may partake freely and without hindrance of the food of salvation." [48]

Such is the mystery of the Lord's manger, and such is the clear sign of the Savior's coming into the world, which the Angel showed to the shepherds: an Infant wrapped in swaddling bands, lying in a manger. And truly this is a great sign, for it is full of great mysteries, as we have already heard.

Therefore let honor, thanksgiving, and worship from all creation be offered to that Divine Infant, born for our sake; and let glory and praise from all generations be given unto the Most Pure and Most Blessed Virgin Mary, who bore Him, unto the ages. Amen.

* * *

48. Blessed Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus in Syria, known especially for his commentaries on Holy Scripture. He lived in the fifth century.

Account of the Worship of the Magi

Сказание о поклонении волхвов

"Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king ... behold, wise men from the East came" (Mt. 2:1)—not from any one eastern country, but from various countries, as is evident from the writings of the holy Fathers, who speak of this in different ways. Some of them hold that the wise men were from Persia[49]; this is the opinion of St. John Chrysostom, St. Cyril of Alexandria, Theophylact, and others, on the grounds that the art of observing the stars[50] flourished especially in that country, and no one there could become king without first studying this art. Others suppose that the wise men were from Arabia[51]; this is the opinion of St. Martyr Justin[52], St. Cyprian, and St. Epiphanius, on the grounds that this country was exceedingly rich in gold, frankincense, and myrrh[53]. And some think that the wise men came from Ethiopia[54], because the Queen of Sheba—that is, the Ethiopian queen—once came from there to Jerusalem to hear the wisdom of Solomon[55]. According to the explanation of Blessed Jerome, this prefigured the present event, namely, the coming of the wise men to the spiritual Solomon, Christ, Who is the wisdom of God (Blessed Jerome, Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah). David also says: "Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God" (Ps. 67:32). In any

49. Persia is the country lying between Arabia and Asia Minor on the one side, and India and Turkestan on the other.

50. This art consisted in determining the fate of men by the movements of the stars and other heavenly luminaries and by their positions of this or that kind, and in making predictions concerning future events.

51. Arabia is a vast country in the southwest of Asia, occupying the peninsula to the south of Syria and Palestine.

52. St. Justin Martyr the Philosopher, formerly a pagan, who afterward turned to Christianity and combined the pursuit of philosophy with the calling of a Christian. Among his writings two defensive discourses (or apologies) are especially remarkable, which he presented to the emperors Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius in defense of the Christians, as well as a dialogue with the Jew Trypho. St. Justin suffered martyrdom during the persecution under Marcus Aurelius. The Church celebrates his memory on June 1.

53. Frankincense is a kind of fragrant resin used in worship for censing. Myrrh is a fragrant substance from the vegetable kingdom (the sap from the bark of the myrrh tree), used in the burial of the dead and preserving the body of the deceased from corruption.

54. Ethiopia is a country in Africa on the shores of the Red Sea, the present-day Abyssinia.

55. See 3 Kgdms. 10:1–13.

case, all the countries named are eastern and border one another; they abounded in gold, frankincense, and spices, and the practices of sorcery and star-gazing were widespread in them all. Moreover, the wise men of those countries were not unfamiliar with the prophecy of Balaam[56] concerning the star that was to shine forth, a prophecy handed down among them from generation to generation, partly orally and partly in writing. It may be thought most likely that one of the wise men was from Persia, another from Arabia, and the third from Ethiopia, for David's prophecy points to their origins in different countries, where it says: "The kings of Tharsis and of the isles shall offer gifts: the kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring presents" (Ps. 71:10). David foretold here the wise men who were to come to Christ with gifts, as the interpreters of Holy Scripture suppose. David's words, "the kings of Tharsis," mean "from beyond the sea," for "Tharsis" means "sea"; understand Persia here, then, as lying beyond the sea[57]. "The kings of Arabia" plainly points to Arabia. David points to Ethiopia when he says, "and Saba shall bring gifts," for Saba is a city that is the capital of all Ethiopia. Thus, the three wise men were from Persia, Arabia, and Ethiopia.

They are called wise men not in the sense of men who practised demonic sorceries and harmful spells, but because among the Arabians, Syrians, Persians, Ethiopians, and other eastern peoples, it was customary to call their wise men and star-gazers "magi." These wise men were not of the number of magicians and sorcerers, but of the wisest observers of the stars and philosophers[58]. They are also called kings, not in the sense of powerful sovereigns ruling many countries, but as men who had each received from their people a city or a particular principal-

56. Balaam was a prophet whom the Moabite king Balak summoned from Mesopotamia that he might curse the Israelites, but who, by the sudden action of the Spirit of God, pronounced a blessing upon the Hebrew people, and at the same time foretold the appearance of the Messiah (the prophecy of Balaam concerning the star out of Jacob). See Num. 22:23–24.

57. It is not entirely accurate to say that Persia lies beyond the sea from Palestine, because the Persian Gulf separates Persia only from Arabia.

58. Philosophers are men who occupied themselves with investigating questions concerning the origin of the world and of man, also the question of virtue, the ultimate end of all that exists, the meaning of human life, and many other things.

ity. For Holy Scripture customarily calls the rulers of individual cities kings, as is evident from Gen. 14. Which cities these kings came from is not known with certainty; only that they were from eastern countries and that there were three of them, according to the number of the gifts they brought: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Although each set out from his own country, yet, guided by one star, they met together on their journey by God's providence; learning one another's purpose, they proceeded together, following the star of which the renowned star-gazer Balaam had once foretold, saying: "A star shall rise out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (Num. 24:17). What kind of star was it? Chrysostom and Theophylact assert that it was not one of the heavenly or visible luminaries, but a certain Divine and angelic power that appeared in place of a star. For all the stars have had their being from the creation of the world, whereas this star appeared at the end of the ages, at the Incarnation of God the Word. All the stars have their place in heaven, but this star was seen in the air; all the stars ordinarily travel from east to west, but this star moved unusually from the east toward the south, in the direction of Jerusalem; all the stars shine only at night, but this star shone by day as well, like the sun, surpassing the heavenly stars beyond measure both in radiance and in greatness. All the stars, together with the other luminaries—the sun, the moon, and the whole circle of the heavenly bodies—have their constant movement and course, but this star sometimes moved and sometimes stood still, as Theophylact also says: "When the wise men were moving, the star moved too; when they rested, it stood still."

As for the time when that star appeared, the various interpreters hold different opinions. Some say that it appeared on the very night and at the very hour of the Savior's birth from the Virgin, but this opinion is not credible. For if the star had appeared then, how could the wise men have come from afar to Jerusalem in so short a time? After 40 days had passed from the birth of the God-Child, and the prescribed purification had been fulfilled in the temple, Joseph immediately, without delay,

set out from his house in Nazareth for Egypt, taking only what was necessary for the journey. Though some say that the wise men took swift horses and, travelling in haste, reached Bethlehem on the 13th day after the Nativity of Christ, this too is not credible. They were kings, after all, not runners, and they travelled with gifts and many servants, as befitted their royal rank and honour, as well as with animals and belongings needed for the journey. How, then, could they have reached the city of Bethlehem from Persia, Arabia, and Ethiopia in 13 days? Moreover, they were detained for a time in Jerusalem by Herod, until the chief priests and scribes had been gathered and questioned, and it had been determined that Christ must be born in Bethlehem of Judaea.

Other interpreters, among whom is St. Epiphanius, say that the star appeared at the hour of Christ's Nativity, but that the wise men came to worship after two years had passed, and found the Christ Child already two years old. This opinion is based on the fact that Herod ordered the children of two years and under to be slain, according to the time which he had carefully learned from the wise men. But St. Theophylact calls this opinion manifestly false, for the understanding accepted by the whole Church is that the wise men worshipped Christ in Bethlehem while He was still in the cave; and after two years Christ was not only no longer in Bethlehem, but not even in Palestine, being instead in Egypt. For, as was said, according to the testimony of St. Luke, after the purification on the 40th day in the temple, where the elder Symeon met the Lord, and after everything had been done according to the law of the Lord, St. Joseph and the Most Pure Virgin Mary with the Child immediately returned to Galilee, not Judaea, and to their own city of Nazareth, not Bethlehem; and from Nazareth they set out for Egypt at the Angel's command. How, then, could the wise men have found Christ in Bethlehem after two years?

Nicephorus, an ancient Greek historian[59], relates that the star appeared in the East two years before the Nativity, and that the wise men trav-

59. Nicephorus Callistus, a Greek historian of the fourteenth century, who left us an *Ecclesiastical History*.

elled for two years to Jerusalem, arriving at the very hour of the Nativity. It seems that this historian too agrees with what is written in the Gospel concerning the slaying of the children of two years and under, but his opinion is also unreliable. For what need would the wise men have had of a two-year journey from the eastern countries, from which Jerusalem could be reached in two or three months? Even if they travelled slowly and for a long time, as befitted kings, it is nevertheless incredible that they would have spent more than six or seven months on the road, for the eastern countries, such as Persia, Arabia, and Ethiopia, are not so far from Jerusalem that the journey between them and that city could last two years.

What, then, is the reliable opinion concerning the time when the star appeared? I think it is the opinion of St. John Chrysostom and Theophylact. These teachers say: "The star appeared to the wise men before the Nativity of Christ. Since they had a long journey before them, the star appeared to them well before the Savior's Nativity, so that they might reach Bethlehem and worship Christ while He was still in swaddling clothes." Let us note that these teachers of the Church do not assign a period of two years to the star, but only say that it appeared "a long time beforehand," as if to say, "some months beforehand." In keeping with this interpretation of Chrysostom and Theophylact, according to which the star appeared before the time of Christ's Nativity, it should be understood that on the very day and hour when, through the Archangel's annunciation and the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, the Word became flesh, taking flesh in the most immaculate womb of the Virgin, nine months before the Nativity, the star appeared in the East. Understanding it thus, we shall neither depart from the testimony of the teachers mentioned above, nor accept the incredible delay of the wise men on their journey for two years. The question of the two-year age of the children slain will be discussed further on, on the day of their commemoration.

Thus, nine months before the Nativity of Christ, as we have just said, at the time of the Annunciation, the wise men saw the star in the East

and at first, filled with wonder and perplexity, wondered what this star could be. Was it some meteor[60], shining in the air and foretelling some calamity, as comets also foretell[61]? And indeed, that star did foretell calamities in those lands for the soul-destroying enemy: the fall of idols, the expulsion of demons, and the bright radiance of the light of the holy faith. Then, understanding that this star was no chance occurrence, but possessed a Divine nature and likeness, the wise men recalled the ancient prophecy of Balaam, and were also enlightened by what the Indian Sibyl Erythraea[62] had foretold concerning the same star. Above all, as St. Leo, Pope of Rome, understands it, they were secretly taught by God Himself that the time had come for the birth of the Lord and King of the whole universe, Who was to be born in Israel, as Balaam had also foretold: "A man shall arise out of Israel" (Num. 24:17), and that this was His star, foretold from of old.

Firmly believing that this was indeed so, and fully making ready for the journey, they set out from their countries and, as has already been said, met on the way and travelled together in unity of purpose. Meanwhile, the nine-month period from the star's appearance was drawing to its close, and the hour of Christ's Nativity was approaching. They drew near to the borders of Palestine and at last reached the capital of Judaea, Jerusalem, on the very day of Christ's Nativity. As they approached Jerusalem, the star that had been leading them suddenly vanished from sight. For if that same star had shone in Jerusalem, the people would surely have seen it and followed the wise men with it to Christ. Then both Herod and the envious leaders of the Jewish synagogue would have learned where Christ had been born, and in their

60. Meteors, according to the most recent opinion, are fragments of a single planet that has broken apart (a planet being a star that has motion), which sometimes fall upon the surface of the earth.

61. A comet is a heavenly body that has no regular motion across the sky but appears after long periods. According to ancient notions, comets in different times foretold various calamities and misfortunes.

62. The Erythraean Sibyl, that is, from the city of Erythraea, which was probably situated on the shore of the Red Sea, in Ethiopia, the present-day Abyssinia. Here the Erythraean Sibyl is inaccurately called Indian. — There were, moreover, three other Erythraeas: one in Greece, in Boeotia; another in Asia Minor; and a third in Aetolia.

envy would have killed Him prematurely. But God's providence, which orders our salvation best, commanded the star to disappear, partly so that those who sought the Child's soul might not learn the place of the cave, partly because the eyes of the wicked Jewish people were unworthy to see that most wondrous star, and partly to test their faith: would they believe the words of the wise men who proclaimed the coming of the Messiah, and would they desire to know Christ, the Savior of the world? If they would not, then this would be to their greater condemnation. Blessed Theophylact reasons thus concerning this: "Why," he says, "did the wise men come? For the condemnation of the Jews. For if the wise men, being Gentiles, believed, what answer can the Jews make? The wise men came from such distant lands to worship Christ, while the Jews, having Him among them, persecuted Him."

The Magi, entering the capital city of Jerusalem, inquired about the newborn King: "Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him" (Mt. 2:2). And at once this news astonished the people and troubled King Herod and all the chief men of Jerusalem. The king, gathering all the chief priests and scribes, asked them:

"Where is Christ to be born?"

He began to fear lest his kingdom be taken from him, and he pondered how he might kill the newborn King. Learning that Christ was to be born in Bethlehem, he summoned the Magi and sought from them exact information about the time the star had appeared. Then, concealing his deceit, harboring an unrighteous thought and an evil intent, he said craftily:

"Go and search diligently for the Child, and when you have found Him, bring me word, that I too may go and worship Him" (Mt. 2:8).

When the Magi had left Jerusalem, the star that had guided them appeared at once and went before them, and they rejoiced greatly at its reappearance. It went before them until it brought them to Bethlehem, to the cave, and stopped over the place where the Child was. Over the dwelling where the Child was, the star stood still; that is, it came down from on high and drew near to the earth. Otherwise it would not have been possible to tell over which place it stood, had it not come lower.

Thus reasons also the blessed Theophylact, following St. John Chrysostom: "This was an extraordinary sign," he says, "for the star came down from on high and, descending to the earth, showed the Magi the place. For if it had been high up, how could they have known the exact place where Christ was? For every star rules over many places. As you often see the moon above your house, so it seems to me that it stands over my house, and to everyone it seems the same, namely, that the moon or some star stands only over them. In like manner that star could not have pointed clearly to Christ, had it not come down and stopped over the head of the Infant." And by this miracle it is evident that the star was not one of the stars fixed in the firmament of heaven, but was a special power of God. Thus the Magi found Him whom they sought when they entered the house, as the Gospel says. On this basis many hold that they found Christ not in the cave but in one of the houses of the town, since the Gospel mentions not a cave but a house. According to this opinion, the Gospel says, as it were: "When the multitude of people who had come for the census had dispersed, and the common inn and the other houses of the Bethlehemites had become free, then the Mother and the Child were moved from the cave into one of the houses." But the holy martyr Justin, Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa and Jerome say that the Lord remained in the cave where He was born until the time of purification, which took place on the fortieth day, and that the Magi found Him there. And so it came about, that earthly kings might learn that the Kingdom of the newborn King is in poverty, in humility and in contempt of worldly glory, and not in riches, vanity and palaces. The purpose of this was also that their faith might be more strongly revealed, by virtue of which they did not repent or murmur when they found Him for whose sake they had made so long a journey, and whom they had hoped to find in royal palaces, in such poverty.

Having found the Lord in the cave, the Magi fell down and worshipped Him, not with a simple reverence but with the worship due to God, recognizing Him not only as man but as God. For, as St. Irenaeus and Pope Leo say: "Those Magi, mystically enlightened by the grace of the Lord, on seeing the Infant, came to know and believed that He is

God, and therefore worshipped Him not only as King but as God, with the worship befitting God. Therefore it is written: 'falling down, they opened their treasures and offered Him gifts' (Mt. 2:11), fulfilling the commandment: 'None shall appear before the face of the Lord empty' (Ex. 23:15)." What gifts? Gold, frankincense and myrrh: gold as to a King, frankincense as to God, myrrh as to a mortal man (Blessed Theophylact). For the Jews anointed the body of the dead with myrrh, wishing to preserve it whole. Thus three kings honored the One of the Trinity with three gifts, and by these gifts they confessed in Him two natures. Concerning this St. Leo says: "They offer frankincense to God, myrrh to man, gold to the King, rightly honoring the divine and human nature in unity; they believe this in their heart and confess it by their gifts."

Having received word in a dream from an Angel who appeared to them, that they should not return to Herod, who plotted and intended to kill the newborn King, the Magi returned by another way each to his own country, and there became teachers and preachers of Christ, according to the trustworthy witness of Nicephorus. For, preaching the coming into the world of Christ, the Son of God, they taught people to believe in Him as they themselves believed, and it is beyond doubt that after death they were counted worthy to be numbered among the saints. And their names are these: the first, Melchior, old and gray, with long hair and beard; he offered gold to the King and Lord. The second, Gaspar, young and beardless, with a ruddy face; he offered frankincense to the God made man. The third, Balthasar, dark of face, with a long beard; he offered myrrh to the mortal Son of Man. Their bodies, after many years, were first transferred to Constantinople, then to Milan[63], and afterwards to Cologne[64], in honor of Christ the Incarnate God, to Whom, with the One who bore Him, be glory from us forever. Amen.

63. Mediolanum, the present-day Milan, a city in northern Italy, the capital of ancient Liguria.
64. Cologne (ancient Colonia Agrippina), an ancient city on the Rhine in Germany, famous for its magnificent cathedral, in which, according to the pious belief of Western Christians, parts of the relics of the holy three Magi rest. Saint Demetrius likewise considers Cologne to be the possessor of this holy treasure.

Kontakion, Tone 6:

He who was born of the Father before the morning star without a mother, today became incarnate on earth of thee without a father: wherefore a star proclaims the good news to the Magi, and Angels with shepherds sing Thy ineffable Nativity, O Full of Grace.

* * *

NOTES

8689. St. Basil the Great, archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, one of the greatest hierarchs of the fourth century, who, together with St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom, was granted the title of "Universal Teacher." Having received a truly Christian upbringing in the midst of his pious family, and afterwards a thorough scholarly education in the schools of Caesarea in Palestine and of Athens, he began his service to the Church at the most difficult time for her, when the Arian controversies greatly troubled and tore her apart. After a long stay in the desert of Pontus, where he lived a most strict ascetic life, he accepted the presbyterate in 364, and in 370 he took the see of the archbishop of Caesarea. In this office he firmly defended Orthodoxy against Arianism, and despite the strenuous efforts of the then emperor Valens, a fierce adherent of the Arian heresy, to win him to his side, he unwaveringly stood guard over the Orthodox faith. Among his numerous writings the following are especially known: the Homilies on the Hexaemeron, homilies on the prophet Isaiah, homilies on the psalms, many works against the Arians, monastic rules, the Liturgy, many discourses, letters and prayers, and others. St. Basil died in 379. His memory is celebrated on January 1.

8696. Here is meant the well-known rite which, according to the Law of Moses (Num. 5), was performed in the case of a husband's suspicion that his wife had committed adultery. The suspected person was brought to the priest, who, after a sacrifice, took holy water in an earthen vessel, putting into it dust from the floor of the tabernacle or of the Temple (when it replaced the tabernacle), uncovered the wife's head, and then, placing a grain offering in her hands while holding the water himself in his hand, pronounced over her a solemn adjuration of such a kind that, if she were innocent, this water would bring her no punishment, but if she were guilty it would become for her a curse from which her thighs would waste away and her belly swell. After certain other rites, the priest gave the wife to drink of this water. It is remarkable that, according to the account of the apocryphal Gospel, the high priest himself (and not a priest) performed this rite, and not only over the Virgin Mary but also over Joseph.



THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 26

26 декабря

New Calendar December 26 · Old Calendar January 8 (civil dates)

Tale of the Flight of the Most Pure Virgin Theotokos with the God-Infant into Egypt

Сказание о Бегстве Пречистой Девы Богородицы с Богомладенцем в Египет

After the Magi had departed from Bethlehem, an Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, commanding him to flee with the newborn Infant Jesus Christ and His Mother, the Most Pure Virgin Mary, into Egypt, and to remain there until he should be commanded to return from there, for Herod wished to seek out the Infant in order to destroy Him. Joseph arose, took the Infant and His Mother by night, and went into Egypt. But first, before his departure thither, he fulfilled in the Temple of Solomon all that was prescribed by the Law of the Lord, for the days of purification of the Most Pure and Immaculate Mother of God had already come, and in that temple the aged Simeon and the prophetess Anna met our Lord. Then, having fulfilled all that was prescribed by the Law, Joseph went to Nazareth, to his own house. For so says St. Luke: "And when they had performed all things according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth" (Lk. 2:39). Hence it is evident that they did not go straight from Bethlehem to Egypt, but first went to the Temple of the Lord, then to Nazareth, and finally into Egypt. St. Theophylact also bears witness to this in his commentary on the Evangelist Matthew, when he writes thus: "Question: How is it that the Evangelist Luke says that the Lord withdrew to Nazareth after the forty days following His birth and after His meeting with the aged Simeon, while here St. Matthew says that He came to Nazareth only after returning from Egypt? Answer: Know that the Evangelist Luke mentions what

the Evangelist Matthew passed over in silence, namely that the Lord (Luke says) after His nativity went to Nazareth. Matthew speaks of what happened afterwards, namely: how our Lord fled into Egypt and how, after returning from there, He again went to Nazareth. In general the Evangelists do not contradict one another, but only Luke speaks of Christ's removal from Bethlehem to Nazareth, while Matthew relates His return to Nazareth from Egypt." Thus, upon leaving the Temple of the Lord, the holy travelers first set out for Nazareth and immediately gave orders concerning their house; then, taking everything needful for the journey, they hastened by night (so that the nearest neighbors would not learn of it) and set off along the road to Egypt. They took with them, to serve them, also James, the eldest son of Joseph, who was afterwards called the brother of the Lord, as is seen from the Church hymn for October 23, where it is sung thus: "Thou wast revealed as a brother, O disciple and eyewitness of the divine mysteries, who fled with Him and was in Egypt with Joseph" [1]. Hence it is evident that James also accompanied the Holy Family on the way into Egypt, serving them during the journey. The Lord fled into Egypt partly in order to show that He is a true incarnate man, and not a spirit or an apparition (as St. Ephraim points out in his homily on the Transfiguration, when he says: "If He had not been in the flesh, with whom then would Joseph have fled into Egypt?"); and partly in order to teach us to flee from the wrath and fury of men, and not to resist them with pride. So also St. Chrysostom explains: "In His flight," he said, "the Lord teaches us to give place to wrath, that is, to flee from human fury. And if the Almighty flees, we who are proud learn by this not to expose ourselves to danger." The purpose of the Lord's flight into Egypt was also to cleanse Egypt of idols, and, as St. Pope Leo says, that without this country, in which for the first time through the slaying of the lamb the saving sign of the Cross and the Pascha of the Lord were foreshadowed, the mystery of the most holy sacrifice should not be prepared. It was also so that the following prophecy of Isaiah might be fulfilled: "The Lord rides upon a swift cloud, and comes into Egypt; and the

1. At the Aposticha, the second sticheron.

idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence" (Is. 19:1). In this passage St. Ambrose understands by the cloud the Most Pure Virgin, who carried the Lord in her arms into Egypt, and the idols of the Egyptian gods fell. That cloud, the Most Pure Virgin, is "swift," for she was not burdened by any weight of sin, or carnal desire, or knowledge of marriage.

It is also related that when the righteous Joseph, the Most Pure Virgin and the God-Infant were journeying into Egypt, in a certain desert place robbers attacked them and wished to take away their donkey, on which they carried the little that was necessary for the road, and on which they sometimes also rode themselves. One of those robbers, seeing the Infant of wondrous beauty and marveling at such beauty, said:

"If God had taken upon Himself a human body, He would not wish to be more beautiful than this Infant."

Having said this, he forbade his companions, the other robbers, and did not allow them to harm these travelers in any way. Then the Most Pure Theotokos said to that robber:

"Know that this Infant will repay you with a generous reward for having protected Him."

This robber was the same one who afterwards, at the Crucifixion of Christ, was hanged on the cross on the right side, and to whom the Lord said: "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise" (Lk. 23:43). Thus the prophetic foretelling of the Mother of God was fulfilled, that "this Infant will repay thee."

When they had entered the land of Egypt and were within the borders of the Thebaid, they drew near to the city of Hermopolis [2]. Near the entrance to this city there grew a very beautiful tree called the "Persea," which the local inhabitants, according to their idolatrous custom, honored as a god because of its height and majestic beauty, worshipping it and offering sacrifices to it, for a demon also dwelt in that tree, whom they revered. When the Most Pure Mother of God with the

2. Thebaid: the region of the Egyptian city of Thebes, famous in antiquity; by the name of its principal city this name was also applied to all of Upper (southern) Egypt in general. Hermopolis: one of the significant cities of ancient Egypt, serving as a prominent religious center of paganism.

Divine Infant drew near to that tree, at once it was violently shaken, for the demon, afraid at the coming of Jesus, fled. And the tree bowed its top down to the very ground, paying fitting reverence to its Creator and His Mother, the Most Pure Virgin; moreover, it screened them with the shade of its many-leaved branches from the sun's heat, and thus gave the weary holy travelers the opportunity to rest. And in that bowed state the tree remained as a manifest sign of the Lord's coming into Egypt. After the Lord with His Mother and Joseph rested beneath this tree, the tree received healing power, for by its branches all kinds of diseases were healed. Then the holy travelers first entered that city and the idol temple that stood in it, and at once all the idols fell. Palladius mentions this temple in the *Lausiac History* [3]: "We saw," he says, "there (in Hermopolis) an idol temple, in which, at the time of the Saviour's coming, all the idols fell prostrate on the ground. Likewise also in one village called 'Sirene,' three hundred and sixty-five idols fell in one temple, at the time when Christ entered there with His Most Pure Mother" [4].

Indeed, throughout all Egypt at the time of the Lord's coming the idols were broken, and the demons fled from them, and in this event was fulfilled what the holy prophet Jeremiah foretold while he was in Egypt, when he said: "All the idols shall fall, and all the images of the gods shall be broken, when there comes here the Virgin Mother with the Infant born in a manger." From the time of this prophecy of Jeremiah the Egyptians had a custom of depicting the Virgin reposing

3. Palladius of Helenopolis (from 368 to 430) was a native of Galatia; in 388 he arrived in Alexandria, from there afterward withdrew to a nearby desert for the labors of silence, and later settled in Bethlehem; in 399 he was elected bishop of Helenopolis in Bithynia, in Asia Minor. After that, Emperor Arcadius exiled him, as a partisan of St. John Chrysostom, to Upper Egypt, from where in 408 he was transferred to Antinoë, and in 412 was returned to his see at Helenopolis. At the request of Lausus, prefect of Cappadocia, in 420 he compiled a collection of lives of the holy ascetics and accounts of them, which in his honor was called the "Lausiac History." — The commemoration of Palladius of Helenopolis is on the Saturday of Cheesefare.

4. All the particulars about the journey of the Most Holy Virgin with the Infant Jesus and with the Righteous Joseph into Egypt and their sojourn there, as well as the particulars of the Nativity of Christ, are taken from the apocryphal Gospels, especially from the so-called "Gospel of the Infancy of the Savior," and also from the apocryphal work known under the title "History of the Birth of Mary and the Childhood of the Savior." The tradition of the fall of the Egyptian idols at the entry of her family into Egypt is also mentioned in the Akathist to the Savior, where it is said: "For the idols, O our Savior, unable to bear Thy strength, fell" (Oikos 6).

on a bed, and beside her the Infant lying in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes, and of worshipping this image. When once King Ptolemy asked the Egyptian priests why they did this, they answered: "This is a mystery revealed to our most ancient forefathers by a certain holy prophet, and we are awaiting the fulfilment of that prophecy and the disclosure of this mystery."

After this the holy travelers turned somewhat aside from the city of Hermopolis and, seeking a place to rest, entered a village called "Natarea," lying not far from Heliopolis[5]. Near this village Joseph left the Most Pure Virgin Mary with Christ the Lord, and himself went into the village to procure what was needful. And that fig tree, which had sheltered the holy wanderers beneath it, split from top to bottom and lowered its crown, forming as it were a canopy or tent over their heads; and below, at its root, it formed in that cleft a hollow convenient for dwelling, and there the Most Pure Virgin lay down with the Infant and rested from the journey. That place is to this day in great veneration not only among Christians but also among the Saracens, who even now (as is related by trustworthy eyewitnesses) kindle a lamp with oil in the cleft of the tree in honor of the Virgin and the Infant who rested there. Joseph and the Most Holy Theotokos desired to remain in that village, and, finding for themselves a hut not far from that tree, they began to live in it. Another miracle also came to pass by the power of the Divine Infant, for there, near their dwelling and near that wondrous tree, a spring of living water suddenly appeared, from which the Most Pure Virgin drew water for her needs and in which she bathed her Infant. That spring exists even to this day, having very cold and wholesome water. And what is yet more wonderful, this is the only spring of living water in all the land of Egypt, and it is famed in that village. Here ends the account of the sojourn of the Most Pure Mother of God with Christ in Egypt, where they remained some years. But there is no exact report of how many years the Lord spent in Egypt. St. Epiphanius says two years, Nicephorus three years, and George Cedrenus five years; others, as Ammonius of Alexandria, think seven years. In any case it is certain

5. Heliopolis: a city in Lower (northern) Egypt.

that they remained until the death of Herod, as the Gospel says: "And was there until the death of Herod" (Mt. 2:15).

After the slaughter of the Bethlehem infants, and after the wretched Herod perished by an evil death, the Angel of the Lord again appeared in a dream to Joseph, bidding him return from the land of Egypt to the land of Israel, "for (he said) those who sought the soul of the child are dead." Joseph arose, took the Child and His Mother, and went into Judea, which constituted the better and greater part of the land of Israel. But hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judea in place of Herod his father, he was afraid to go there. For Herod left behind him three sons: the first Archelaus, the second Herod Antipas, and the third, the youngest, Philip. All of them, after their father's death, went to Rome to the emperor, out of rivalry, since each of them wished to obtain his father's kingdom. The emperor, granting none of them royal honor, divided the kingdom into four parts, calling them tetrarchies. To the eldest brother Archelaus he gave Judea, to Herod Antipas he gave Galilee, and to the youngest brother Philip the land of Trachonitis; Abilene he gave to Lysanias, the younger son of the elder Lysanias, once a friend of Herod, who had afterward been slain by him out of envy. Dismissing them all from Rome, the emperor promised Archelaus royal honor as well, if only he should show good and careful administration of his portion. But Archelaus was in no way better than his cruel father, tormenting and killing many, for, coming to Jerusalem, he at once needlessly slew three thousand of the people, and he ordered many citizens to be tormented on the feast day, in the midst of the temple, before the whole assembly of the Jews. Because of such cruelty he was, after some years, accused, deprived of power, and sent into exile. Joseph, on his return, heard that this wicked Archelaus was reigning, though without the royal title, and was afraid to go into Judea; but receiving a warning in a dream from that Angel who had appeared to him before, he withdrew into the regions of Galilee, under the rule of Herod Antipas, brother of Archelaus, for this Herod governed the people with greater gentleness than his brother; and Joseph settled in the city of Nazareth, in his own house, where they had lived before, that what was

foretold of Christ the Lord by the prophets might be fulfilled, that He should be called a Nazarene. To Him be glory forever. Amen.

* * *

Life of the Righteous King David[6]

Житие праведного царя Давида

The holy king and prophet David was of the tribe of Judah. His father Jesse was one of the elders of the city of Bethlehem and had eight sons, of whom David was the youngest. When David reached the age of youth, his father entrusted him with the pasturing of his flocks. The youth lived in solitude among the flocks, guarding his father's possessions; when a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, David pursued them and took the prey back; when the beast rushed at him, David seized it by the mane, struck it, and slew it. The Lord kept the youth, for he was pious and did not love idleness; he fashioned for himself a musical instrument with strings, and in his hours of leisure he practiced singing and playing on this instrument. David turned the gift of this art, given him by God, to the service of God, to the glorification of His holy Name; abiding unceasingly in contemplation of God, the youth, striking the strings, sang of the wisdom and goodness of the Heavenly Father, revealed in all of God's creation and in human life.

At that time the king of Israel was Saul. By some of his actions he showed disobedience to the commandments of the Lord, and he revealed that he placed his own strength and desires above the will and mercy of the King of kings. Then the Lord commanded the prophet Samuel to declare to Saul:

"Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has rejected you, so that you shall not be king."

Soon after this the Lord sent Samuel to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for "among his sons I have seen for Myself a king," said the Lord. Arriving

6. The memory of the Righteous David the King and Joseph the Betrothed is observed on the Sunday after the Nativity of Christ, which for this reason is called the Sunday of the Godfathers. If this Sunday falls on 1 January, that is, after the Afterfeast of the Nativity of Christ, the service to the said Saints is celebrated on 26 December.

at Bethlehem, the prophet ordered the elders of the city to prepare themselves to offer a sacrifice to the God of Israel, inviting Jesse and his sons to this as well. When Jesse's sons came, Samuel, seeing the eldest of them, Eliab, thought he was God's chosen one, but the Lord said to the prophet:

"Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, for I have rejected him. I do not look as man looks: for man looks at the face, but the Lord looks at the heart."

And Samuel received no revelation concerning any of the seven sons who were with Jesse; then he asked Jesse whether all his children were here. The old man answered that there was yet one son, who tended the sheep; the prophet ordered that the youth be sent for. When David came, the Lord said to Samuel:

"Arise, anoint him, for this is he."

The prophet took the horn of oil he had brought with him and anointed David in the midst of his brethren. And the Spirit of the Lord rested upon David from that day forward. Then Samuel departed from Bethlehem, and the youth returned to his former work.

But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and he fell into a sickness of demonic possession; the attacks of this sickness were grievous, and Saul was constantly in an agitated state, tormented by gloomy thoughts. Then the courtiers advised their sovereign to summon a man skilled at playing the harp, so that by his playing he might calm the king during his attacks. Saul agreed, and then one of the courtiers pointed to David. By the king's command the eighteen-year-old shepherd youth was summoned to the royal palace; when Saul was tormented by his sickness, David played on his harp, pleasing God, and Saul became more at ease and better, and the evil spirit departed from him. David greatly pleased the king and became his armor-bearer, but his service at court was not unbroken, and he was able to go away for long periods to his native city and continued to occupy himself with his shepherd's work.

Soon an invasion of the Philistines[7] into the land of Israel took place. Entering the borders of the tribe of Judah, they encamped

between Socoh and Azekah in Ephes-dammim[8]. Saul with the Israelite army stopped about two versts farther south; between the two camps lay a wide valley. The Philistines resolved to end the war by a duel, customary in antiquity, and from their camp came forth the giant Goliath, a native of Gath, of the race of the Anakim[9]. He was six cubits and a span in height[10], that is, four arshins and fourteen vershoks, and he wore full military armor of bronze: scale armor weighing five thousand shekels[11], a helmet, greaves, and a shield; in his hands he bore an iron spear weighing sixty shekels. Addressing the Israelite host, Goliath cried out:

"Choose a man from among you, and let him come down to me; if he kills me, we will be your servants; but if I prevail over him, you will be our servants and will serve us."

The terrible appearance of the giant struck terror into the sons of Israel, and none of them dared to enter single combat with Goliath, who with each day grew more haughty, and, coming forth for forty days, reviled the Israelites.

David's brothers were at that time among the warriors who had gone out against the Philistines; once Jesse sent his youngest son to the army to visit his brothers and bring them some supplies of bread. The youth came to the army's baggage train when the host had been drawn up in battle order and was readying for battle with a shout; David hastened to the ranks of the Israelite army to meet his brothers. While he was speaking with them, Goliath came forth from the Philistine line and began to utter his proud words; at the sight of the giant the Israelites fled in fear, and in their ranks they said:

7. The Philistines were descendants of Mizraim, son of Ham; this people, related to the Egyptians, dwelt in the south-western part of Palestine, along the shore of the Mediterranean Sea in the Valley of Shephelah.

8. Succoth, now Shuweikeh, a town in hilly country some 24 versts south-west of Jerusalem. Azekah, the present Dair el-Azbak, some 13 versts north of Succoth. Ephes-dammim (the boundary of blood) was on the site of the present Beit Fazeh (house of bloodshed), some two versts south of Azekah.

9. The sons of Anak were called giants by the Hebrew spies (Num. 13:34); concerning their dwelling in Gath, see Josh. 11:22.

10. Hebrew measures of length: the cubit equals 12 vershoks; the span equals 6 vershoks.

11. The Hebrew shekel weighed 3 zolotniks, 34, 40 doli.

"If anyone were to kill Goliath, the king would richly reward him, give him his daughter in marriage, and make his father's house free in Israel."

The young son of Jesse was deeply stirred by the arrogance of the Philistine giant.

"How dares this uncircumcised Philistine reproach the armies of the Living God?" David said with indignation to the Israelite warriors.

The young man's words reached the king, and he summoned him. David's speech breathed a mighty faith in the help of God when he begged Saul to allow him to fight Goliath, so that the king at last said:

"Go, and may the Lord be with you." David refused the military armor in which Saul had clothed him by command, for he was not accustomed to it. He took his shepherd's staff, his sling, and a pouch in which he placed five smooth stones gathered from the brook, and in this equipment he went out to meet Goliath.

To the mockery and abuse of the Philistine giant, David replied:

"You come against me with sword, spear, and shield, but I come against you in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have reproached. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will kill you and cut off your head, and I will give the corpses of you and of the host of the Philistines to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the earth, and all the earth shall know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear."

And the young man's hope in the help of God did not put him to shame: a stone, aimed truly from David's sling, struck the giant on the forehead with such force that Goliath fell to the ground. David then ran to him and cut off his head with the giant's own sword. Struck by David's exploit, the Philistines took to flight, and the Israelite army, seizing their camp, pursued the enemy victoriously to the borders of their land.

Holding the head of the slain giant in his hands, David presented himself before Saul. The delighted king kept the young man with him and, to the general pleasure of the whole people, raised him to the rank of military commander. When the victors returned home, along the way in all the cities of Israel they were met with festive welcomes, and the

women danced, playing timbrels and cymbals, singing a song of victory with the refrain:

"Saul has defeated his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."

Such an expression of the people's love for David was unpleasing to the king. Saul learned from the prophet that the Lord had taken the kingdom from him and given it to another; Saul began to see in David his successor and to regard the young man with suspicion. The grievous illness that tormented Saul grew worse because of this, and at times the king fell into fits of rage; twice during these attacks he hurled a spear at David, who was playing the lyre to calm the king, but the young man, preserved by the Spirit of God, escaped death. After this Saul began to fear David and removed him from his presence by appointing him commander of a thousand. In this office David acted prudently in all his undertakings, and by this he earned still greater love from the people, to the great displeasure of Saul, who sought his death.

At first the king acted with treachery, sending David on dangerous campaigns against the Philistines. "Let not my hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him," Saul plotted. Sending David to war, the king promised him the hand of his elder daughter Merab, whom, however, he gave to another; and to David he proposed marriage to his other daughter Michal, making it a condition that David accomplish yet another, still more perilous expedition.

"Is it a light thing to be the king's son-in-law, when I am a poor and insignificant man?" the young commander humbly replied to such flattering proposals.

The Lord guarded His chosen one, and he returned each time with victory, so that his name became renowned, and Saul was compelled to give him Michal, who loved David. After this Saul's envy grew still greater; he became David's enemy for life and openly declared his intention to kill his son-in-law.

One of Saul's sons, the valiant Jonathan, had loved David as his own soul since the time of the victory over Goliath; a close friendship bound the two young men. Knowing his father's evil intention, Jonathan said to Saul:

"Let not the king sin against his servant David, for he has committed no sin against you, and his deeds have been of great benefit to you; he risked his life to strike down the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel. You saw it and rejoiced. Why then do you wish to sin against innocent blood and put David to death without cause?"

The king swore that he would not kill David, and good relations were established between the king and his son-in-law, but not for long; soon war with the Philistines began, in which David won a decisive victory. Then Saul, in a fit of rage, once again attempted to pin David to the wall with a spear while David played the lyre before him. David managed to escape and hid in his house. The king sent soldiers to surround the house, to seize David when he came out and to put him to death. The position of the innocent sufferer was hopeless, but David did not despair; he sought consolation and help in prayer, the image of which is found in his fifty-eighth inspired psalm.

"Deliver me from my enemies, O my God," David cried. "Defend me from those who rise up against me. For behold, they lie in wait for my soul; the mighty gather against me, not for my transgression nor for my sin, O Lord; without any fault of mine they run and make ready. Rouse Yourself to help me, and behold. They have strength, but I flee to You, for my defender is God."

Thus David called out, and the Lord saved him from certain destruction by the hand of his loving wife, who let her husband down from the window by a rope.

From this time began David's wanderings. The king pursued his son-in-law "as one hunts a partridge in the mountains" (1 Kgdms. 26:20). David found no refuge either in the settlements of Israel or in the cities of the neighboring Philistines, who remembered his earlier victories. Jonathan tried in vain to appease the king; the king even gave David's wife in marriage to another; the high priest Ahimelech with all his kin was put to death by Saul, who suspected him of sympathy for his son-in-law.[12] David did succeed, however, in sheltering his parents from the royal wrath, placing them with the king of Moab.[13] By a revel-

ation of God given through the prophet Gad, David came into the territory of the tribe of Judah and here hid from the king in the mountainous and desert regions south of Bethlehem. Around him began to gather all who were discontented with Saul, so that soon David stood at the head of a band of up to four hundred men, courageous and warlike. With this band David, himself pursued by the king, nevertheless managed to serve his native people; he drove the Philistines out of the city of Keilah, which they had seized, located in the Judean hills, and he protected the flocks grazing in these mountains from raids by the predators of the wilderness.

David committed his life to the will of God, and the Lord preserved His anointed one. Thus, when David was in Keilah and Saul intended to seize him there, the Lord revealed to David that the citizens of the city would deliver him to the king, whereupon David with his band left that city, and "they went wherever they could" (1 Kgdms. 23:13). Finding a refuge in the mountainous, utterly barren deserts of Ziph and Maon, on the western shore of the Dead Sea, David was nearly surrounded by the royal army, but at that moment Saul received word of a Philistine raid and had to suspend the pursuit for a time. Having repulsed the enemies, the king returned from the wilderness with his army to catch David. While searching for the fugitives in this wild region, abounding in ravines and caves, Saul once entered one of the caves where David was at that time hiding with some of his adherents. Not noticing the enemies hidden in the darkness, Saul took off his mantle; meanwhile those around David recognized the king and began to say to their leader:

"This is the day of which the Lord spoke to you: Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hands, and you shall do to him as you please."

David answered:

12. Ahimelech, when David, during his wanderings, came to him, gave him the sacred bread and the sword of Goliath. News of this reached Saul, which is why he suspected the high priest of sympathy for David.

13. The Moabites were descendants of Manna, son of Lot; they dwelt to the east of the Dead Sea.

"May the Lord not permit me to do this to my lord, the anointed of the Lord, to lay my hand upon him, for he is the anointed of the Lord."

He carefully cut off the edge of Saul's mantle, and when the king, having come out of the cave, had gone some distance away, David called after him. Saul looked back, and David, bowing down to the ground before him, began to persuade the king not to believe the evil slanders.

"My father," said the young man, "look at the edge of your robe in my hand; I cut off the edge of your robe, but I did not kill you. Know and be convinced that there is no evil in my hand, nor treachery, and I have not sinned against you, yet you seek my soul to take it away. May the Lord judge between me and you, and may the Lord avenge me upon you, but my hand shall not be upon you. The Lord will examine and decide my cause, and will save me from your hand."

Saul was deeply moved by the magnanimity of the man he had been pursuing, and with tears acknowledged his own wrongdoing. After this the king returned to his capital, while David continued his wanderings in the wilderness.

Saul did not long remember David's noble deed. His own suspicion, together with David's growing strength and the ever-increasing number of those who supported him, moved the king to renew his pursuit, and Saul again set out into the wilderness with a band of three thousand men. David carefully watched the king's movements, and when Saul encamped on one of the heights, David took up a position on a mountain from which the royal camp could be seen. To learn more precisely the strength of Saul's forces, David went by night into the king's camp with one of his followers, Abishai. The king's commanders were so careless that there was not even a guard by the royal tent, and David and his companion entered it. Saul was sleeping soundly, and at his head stood a spear thrust into the ground. Abishai offered to strike Saul dead with it, but David said:

"As the Lord lives! The Lord shall smite him, or his day shall come and he shall die, or he shall go into battle and perish; but may the Lord never permit me to raise my hand against the Lord's anointed!"

He took the spear and the water cup that were in the tent, to show Saul that the king's life had once again been in his hands, and left the camp, unnoticed by anyone. When he had reached his own camp,

David called out in a loud voice, reproaching the king's commanders for guarding their sovereign so poorly. Saul heard David's voice and began speaking with him from a distance.

The king said:

"I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will do you no harm, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. I have acted foolishly and have erred exceedingly."

David answered:

"Here is the king's spear. Let one of the young men come and take it. And may the Lord reward each man according to his righteousness and his truth, for the Lord delivered the king into my hands, but I would not raise my hand against the Lord's anointed. And just as your life was precious in my eyes, so may my life be held precious in the eyes of the Lord; may He shelter me and deliver me from every tribulation."

At their parting, Saul blessed David in the name of the Lord, and from then on they saw one another no more.

David had many reasons to distrust Saul's good intentions and promises, and therefore considered it safer for himself to leave the borders of the kingdom of Israel and settle in the land of the Philistines. On its southern border stood the city of Ziklag, which the Philistine king assigned as a dwelling place for David and his followers, numbering as many as 600. From there David made raids against the inhabitants of the wilderness, the ancient enemies of the people of Israel. Meanwhile, the Philistine king undertook a formidable invasion of the land of Israel and demanded that David and his band take part in it. It was indescribably hard for David, who loved his own people fervently, to comply; yet even here the help of God, in which he had ever firmly trusted, did not forsake him: the Philistine princes suspected that, being a Hebrew, he could not be a faithful ally against his native land's enemies, and insisted that David return to Ziklag. On the way back he learned that his city had been laid waste by the Amalekites[14], who had

seized the families and possessions of both him and his followers and led them away into the wilderness. Rebellion arose within David's own band: in bitter grief for their sons and daughters, whom the enemy had taken, his companions wanted to stone him. But David strengthened himself with hope in the Lord his God, pursued the raiders, and recovered all their spoil.

The war between the Philistines and the Israelites, which was being waged at that time, ended in the defeat of the latter at the mountains of Gilboa[15]; Saul and his son Jonathan fell in that battle. An Amalekite brought David the news of their death, and told him that, at Saul's request, he had killed him when the Philistines were pursuing him. Hearing this, David cried out:

"How were you not afraid to raise your hand to kill the Lord's anointed?"

And he ordered the messenger to be put to death. David poured out his sincere and profound grief for Saul, who had pursued him, and for his dear friend Jonathan in an inspired song:

"Mountains of Gilboa," the Psalmist cries, "let neither dew nor rain descend upon you, and let there be no fruitful fields upon you, for there the shield of the mighty was cast down, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. Saul and Jonathan, beloved and united in life, were not parted even in death; they were swifter than eagles and stronger than lions. I grieve for you, my brother Jonathan; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was more wonderful than the love of women."

Having mourned Saul and Jonathan, David, by God's revelation, went into the territory of the tribe of Judah and settled with all his companions in Hebron[16]. There David was anointed with oil and proclaimed king of the southern part of the kingdom of Israel[17], while

14. The Amalekites were descendants of Esau; this people inhabited the lands between the land of the Philistines and Egypt.

15. These mountains border the Valley of Jezreel on the south, which separates Galilee from Samaria.

16. Hebron is one of the most ancient cities of Palestine: it lies some 20 versts south of Bethlehem, and in it are the tombs of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with their families (except Rachel, who is buried in Bethlehem).

Saul's son Ish-bosheth reigned over the rest, having been raised to the throne by the commander Abner. The kingdom remained divided for about two years; but, according to the word of God spoken through the Prophet Samuel, authority over Israel could not remain in Saul's house. Ish-bosheth was killed by two traitors among his own bodyguards. The murderers brought his head to David, expecting to receive a reward. But David, mourning the death of his rival, cried out:

"As the Lord lives, who has delivered my soul from every tribulation! If I seized and killed at Ziklag the man who brought me news that Saul was dead and considered himself a bearer of glad tidings, instead of giving him a reward, shall I not now require his blood at your hands and destroy you from the earth, since wicked men have killed an innocent man in his own house, upon his bed?"

And the murderers were put to death. After this, representatives of all the tribes of Israel assembled at Hebron, and David was anointed king over all Israel amid the rejoicing of the whole people.

David's first undertaking was to establish a new capital for the kingdom. For this purpose he chose a strong fortress on the border between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, which was then under the control of the Canaanite tribe of the Jebusites. When the latter refused to surrender it to David willingly, his commander Joab took the fortress by assault. David called it Jerusalem, that is, the city of peace, and built his new palace there. The new capital soon flourished in splendor and wealth, and in time became the most renowned city in the world, as the place of the most important events in the work of the salvation of the human race. To sanctify his capital and to be himself in close proximity to the place where the glory of the Lord dwelt, David set up in Jerusalem a tabernacle like the one Moses had built in the wilderness at God's command, and which in David's time stood at Gibeon[18]. Here he brought from Kiriath-jearim[19] the greatest holy treasure of the people of God, the Ark of the Covenant. The translation of this holy treasure was celebrated with great solemnity. As many as seventy thousand Is-

17. This was about 1055 B.C.
18. Now the village of El-Jib, two hours' journey north of Jerusalem.
19. Kiriath-jearim, a Canaanite city near Gibeon.

raelites took part in the procession. At first the ark was carried on a cart; but when the Lord struck down an Israelite for daring to touch the ark and steady it as the cart lurched, the members of the priestly tribe of Levi carried the ark on their shoulders for the rest of the way. When those carrying the ark had gone six paces, sacrifices of a bullock and a sheep were offered to the Lord. The procession went forward amid the singing of psalms, the loud sound of trumpets and other musical instruments, and the joyful cries of the people. The king himself danced before the Ark of the Lord in reverent exultation, having laid aside his royal robes and wearing only a priestly linen garment. When the ark had been set in its place in the tabernacle, David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings to the Lord and blessed the people in the name of the Lord of Hosts. His wife Michal, whom David had taken back after Saul's death, reproached the king for his conduct during the translation of the ark, seeing it as a humiliation of royal dignity even in the eyes of the women. But David answered:

"I will play and dance before the Lord; and I will yet humble myself more than this, and become even more insignificant in my own eyes. But before the maidservants of whom you spoke, I shall be glorified."

As at the ancient tabernacle in Gibeon, so also before the Ark of God, "upon which is called the name of the Lord of Hosts, who sits upon the Cherubim," David established the order of divine worship according to the law given through Moses. For this purpose he divided the descendants of Levi appointed to serve God into courses, assigning to each their duties in the service. The most renowned musicians and singers were chosen to form properly ordered choirs and compose hymns for the services, and also to glorify God, "playing upon trumpets, cymbals, and various musical instruments." Such men were Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, and David himself stood at their head. In years of trial, he had pondered with particular discernment the ways of Providence and continually poured out his pious feelings in inspired psalms.

In these sacred songs David depicted the weight and depth of undeserved suffering under persecution. With the Psalms he calmed himself in fear and eased his sorrow, quieting the righteous impulses of an-

ger and indignation at human injustice. In them he poured out his deep grief before God and asked for His help. Through his hymns David lifted his spirit to bear sufferings without murmuring, strengthened himself in trust in God his Helper, and offered Him praise and thanksgiving for His unceasing care and protection amid dangers. Often, too, from depicting his own sufferings with hope of deliverance, the persecuted psalmist was carried in the Spirit of prophecy in his songs into the distant future, and beheld the Suffering One, Christ. In His innocent sufferings the prophet-psalmist foresaw the worldwide victory over evil and the opening of a new kingdom of righteousness.[20] When David became king of all Israel, he used his high gift of song to nurture in his people the spirit of faith and piety,[21] love of country,[22] courage,[23] justice[24] and other virtues. All the most important events of David's reign were accompanied by the hymnal outpourings of the pious soul of the king-psalmist. Concerning him the wise son of Sirach bears witness that David "after every deed of his offered thanksgiving to the Most High with words of praise; with all his heart he sang and loved his Creator. And he placed singers before the altar, so that with their voices they might sweeten the chant; he gave festivals their splendor and arranged the seasons with exactness, that they might praise His holy name and fill the sanctuary with sound from early morning" (Sir. 47:9–12).

Zealous for the glorification of the name of the Lord, David said to the prophet Nathan:

"Behold, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God remains under a tent."

The prophet approved the king's intention to build a permanent temple to the Lord, but that same night he received a revelation from the Lord, which he then passed on to David. The Lord said to David through the prophet:

20. Ps. 33; Ps. 51; Ps. 53; Ps. 55; Ps. 56; Ps. 58; Ps. 14.
21. Ps. 1; Ps. 11; Ps. 13; Ps. 14; Ps. 18; Ps. 23; Ps. 28; Ps. 35; Ps. 63; Ps. 103; Ps. 104; Ps. 121; Ps. 144.
22. Ps. 132.
23. Ps. 9; Ps. 19; Ps. 20; Ps. 32, etc.
24. Ps. 14; Ps. 36, etc.

"When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you, which shall come from your loins, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house to My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to Me a son; and if he sins, I will chastise him with the rod of men and the bridles of the sons of men, but My mercy I will not take from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I rejected before your face. And your house and your kingdom shall be steadfast forever before My face, and your throne shall stand forever."

This high promise, which was the chief proof of God's special favor toward David and his line, clarified and lifted the prophetic gaze of the king upon the future destiny of his kingdom. The prophet-psalmist found in this promise an inexhaustible source of songs about the coming everlasting kingdom of the Son of David, Christ the Savior of the world, whom he confesses as the pre-eternal Son of God, calling himself His servant. In his victories over the surrounding peoples David saw the defeat of the enemies of Christ and the worldwide extension of His dominion, proclaiming in solemn hymns the future glory of Christ's kingdom.

And David reigned over all Israel and executed judgment and justice for all his people. In establishing internal order in the kingdom of Israel, which had been shaken in the last years of Saul, David was chiefly concerned to please God, the Heavenly King of Israel, whose representative he was, and to serve the people's good. The aim of his whole life was only to fulfill the law given by God and to make it binding on all his subjects. Thanks to David's rule, his capital, Jerusalem, for many years after him was “the faithful city, full of judgment.” David's full obedience to the divine will was crowned with glorious victories over foreign peoples; under him the kingdom of Israel reached those boundaries which had been promised to the posterity of Abraham at the making of the covenant. Thanks to David's victories, his dominion extended from the Red Sea to the river Euphrates, reached the Arabian desert in the south, and embraced Syria in the north, ending in the west at the Mediterranean Sea. Israel at that time was a mighty state, with many tributary peoples under its power, rich in its own resources and in military

spoils, and prospering through the complete security of the Hebrew king's subjects and their property. Amid such manifest signs of God's mercy, David had only to humbly thank God and do good for the glory of His holy name. But the weaknesses and infirmities inherent in man were not foreign to David either: surrounded by earthly glory and magnificence, he allowed these weaknesses to manifest themselves, and the consequences for him proved very grievous.

Like other rulers of the East, David had several wives and concubines, and the luxury and pomp of the royal court associated with this had an enervating and debilitating influence on David's moral nature. Therefore, when once, walking on the roof of his palace, he saw a beautiful woman bathing in a neighboring courtyard, he was unwilling to suppress the criminal passion within himself, but ordered the woman to be brought to him. This woman, named Bathsheba, was the wife of one of David's military leaders, Uriah, who was at that time on campaign, and she became pregnant by the king. Learning of this, David first tried to conceal his sin from her husband, for which purpose he summoned Uriah to his wife in Jerusalem; but when this failed, he ordered his commander-in-chief to place Uriah during the battle in the most dangerous place. Uriah was killed in the battle, and Bathsheba became David's wife and bore him a son. And the deed that David had done was evil in the eyes of the Lord. To rebuke the king, the prophet Nathan came to him and said to David in the name of the Lord:

"Why have you despised the word of the Lord, and done what is evil before His eyes? Therefore the sword shall not depart from your house forever, because you have despised Me and taken the wife of Uriah."

At the same time the prophet foretold the speedy death of the child born to Bathsheba. The child did indeed fall ill, and for seven days David prayed for the child in complete solitude, without food and without sleep. When the child died, David humbly submitted to the will of God; this submission was as perfect as his repentance for the sin he had committed was sincere and profound. The contrition of his heart was expressed in the fervent penitential psalm, which forever became the prayer of repentance for every penitent sinner (Ps. 50).

God's judgment for the crime committed soon showed itself in David's family in a whole series of shameful and bloody events. Between two beloved sons of David by different wives, the handsome Amnon and Absalom, a deadly enmity arose because Amnon had dishonored Absalom's sister Tamar, and the brother avenged this disgrace on Amnon by treacherously killing him during a feast, and fled the country. The king grieved bitterly over the loss of his beloved children, and only after several years did he permit Absalom to return to the royal palace. For this high mercy the guilty son repaid his father with black ingratitude. He stirred up a rebellion against the already aged David; through his obsequiousness and flattering attention to the needs of the common people, Absalom managed to gather around himself a multitude of adherents and proclaimed himself king in Hebron. A strong conspiracy formed, and the people flocked to Absalom and grew in number around him.

Hearing of this, David, with a small number of attendants, resolved to withdraw for safety into the land beyond the Jordan, and the high priest wished to accompany the king with the Ark of the Covenant.

But David said to the high priest:

"Return the ark of God into the city, and let it stand in its place. If I find grace before the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me back and let me see Him and His dwelling. But if He says thus: 'I have no pleasure in you,' behold, let Him do with me what seems good to Him."

Having crossed the brook Kidron,[25] David went up the Mount of Olives; he went and wept, his head was covered, and he went barefoot; and all the people who were with him covered each his head, and went and wept. The best of the people sympathized with the bitter plight of the aged king, but there were also those who took advantage of the occasion to insult the sufferer with impunity. Thus a certain Shimei of the house of Saul boldly reviled the king, throwing stones and dirt at him. Indignant at this, David's companions asked permission to put the bold man to death, but the sufferer said:

25. This stream flowed on the east side of Jerusalem.

"Leave him alone; let him curse, for the Lord has commanded him. Perhaps the Lord will look upon my humiliation and repay me with good for his present cursing."

The same trust in God's mercy appeared also in the touching hymns[26] in which, in that grievous time, the aged David, wounded in the feelings of a father and a king, poured out his soul before the Lord.

And the Lord delivered His servant out of the calamity that had risen up against him. Beyond the Jordan a strong army gathered around the lawful king, and the command of it David entrusted to the proven commanders Joab, Abishai and Ittai. On their counsel David himself remained in the rear of his army, and he asked the commanders to spare the life of his former son. This request, however, was not fulfilled: when the army of Absalom was routed, Absalom himself sought safety in flight; during his headlong ride through the forest, Absalom became entangled by his luxuriant hair in the branches of an oak and hung suspended from it. Here Joab overtook him and pierced him through, and the mutilated body of the rebellious prince was cast into a pit, which was covered over with a huge heap of stones, in fulfilment of the precept of the law of Moses that stubborn children should be stoned. Learning of this, the unhappy father did not remember the wrong done to him by his son; he went up to the chamber and wept, and as he went he spoke thus:

"O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Oh, who would grant me to die in your place, Absalom, my son, my son!"

David also endured grief of heart from the calamities with which God visited the land of Israel: these were a three-year famine and a three-day pestilence. With humility and submission to the will of the Lord David accepted these trials, propitiating the righteousness of God by prayers and whole burnt offerings for his own sins and the sins of his people.

The last years of his reign, passing in unbroken peace, David spent in preparation for that great work which, by the will of God, his successor was to accomplish, namely the building of the Temple of the

26. Ps. 6; Ps. 31; Ps. 37; Ps. 38; Ps. 142.

Lord. The plans of all the structures of the sacred edifice were drawn up, the drawings of all the appointments of worship were made, all the materials required for the complete furnishing of the Temple were gathered, and craftsmen of every kind were assembled. All this David, while still living, handed over, in the presence of the elders of the people, to his son Solomon, who, according to the word of the Lord, was to inherit the throne; and the elders brought rich offerings of their own, and the people rejoiced at their zeal. In an inspired prayer the king dedicated to the Lord both the treasures he himself had amassed for the building of the Temple and the freewill offerings of his subjects for this great work.

"Who am I," cries David, "and who is my people, that we should be able to offer thus! But all things come from Thee, and of Thy hand we have given Thee what we received. I know, O my God, that Thou searchest the heart and lovest uprightness of heart; I have offered all this from a pure heart, and now I see that Thy people here present also offer to Thee with joy. O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, our fathers! Preserve forever this disposition of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people, and turn their hearts to Thee. And to Solomon my son give a right heart, that he may keep Thy commandments, Thy testimonies and Thy statutes, and do all these things and build the house for which I have made preparation."

Soon after this David made Solomon king, and he was anointed to the kingdom by the high priest Zadok; the whole people rejoiced, and all his servants congratulated David, and the aged king, weighed down by infirmity, bowed upon his bed and said:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who today has given one of my seed to sit upon my throne, and my eyes see it."

And the Lord magnified Solomon in the sight of all Israel and bestowed upon him a glory of kingdom such as no king of Israel had before him. And David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel; the time of his reign was forty years: in Hebron he reigned seven years and in Jerusalem thirty-three years. And he died in a good old age, full of life, riches and glory, and Solomon his son reigned in his place.

The holy Apostle Peter names King David a prophet (Acts 2:30). St. Athanasius of Alexandria, in his interpretation of Psalm 20, teaches: "King David was exalted already by the fact that from his seed was born salvation for the world. For he desired this in his soul and prayed for it. Therefore this was given to him, as a certain crown of pure gold (Ps. 20:4), glorifying his head. For David is glorified among all peoples together with the Lord and his Son according to the flesh. Not only was this salvation a crown for him, but also a desire, and length of days, and glory, and splendour, and joy and gladness and hope, and steadfast mercy." In his interpretation of the words of the fiftieth psalm, "I will teach transgressors Thy ways, and the ungodly shall be converted unto Thee" (Ps. 50:15), St. John Chrysostom places in the mouth of the psalmist the following confession to the Lord:

"Thou hast deigned to honour me so much that Thou hast revealed to me Thy Son and made Him known to me; I have learned that Thou hast a Son who has taken upon Himself human nature, I have learned that Thou hast One enthroned with Thee, and I have proclaimed to the world the cross, the burial, the descent into hell, His resurrection; I have spoken of His judgment, I have spoken of the salvation of the Gentiles, I have spoken of the election of the apostles, I have spoken of the rejection of the Jews, I have spoken of the calling of the Church, I have spoken of the choir of virgins, I have spoken of His sitting at Thy right hand." "Thus, David," the holy father continues, "thou hast proclaimed prophecies about all things; why then dost thou cry, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me' (Ps. 50:12)? Thou art a king, thou art clothed with the diadem, thou art arrayed in the purple. But," he says, "all this is grass, night and a dream; I seek another beauty. Grant me the Holy Spirit, that Thou mayest speak with me again and I with Thee. The Spirit has departed from me as a dove flies away at the sight of filth; I wish to bring Him back, and then I shall come and appear before Thy face; but now I cannot bear this, having lost boldness before Thee. See how David confesses before God. Behold then how great an evil is sin: adultery, murder, transgression of the law, violation of the commandments of the Lord. I say this not to condemn the prophet, but to show his swift repentance. Sin is quickly

committed, and repentance is still more quickly made. Having sinned with the wife of Uriah, he was struck by this sin, and, setting himself to write a psalm, he cried out:

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy great mercy" (Ps. 50).

And by full repentance he received full forgiveness of sin. Both in the features of the character of the righteous king-prophet and in the circumstances of his life, full of trials, the God-wise fathers see a prefiguring of the Son of David according to the flesh, of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His earthly life. St. Chrysostom, reasoning about the modesty, humility and meekness of David, teaches:

"And the meek David struck down Goliath, drove off the army and won the victory. In general, it is characteristic of the meek to forgive the wrongs done to him, and to avenge the wrongs done to others. So also Christ acted." St. Athanasius of Alexandria, in his interpretations of Psalms 51, 56 and 58, bears witness that these psalms, depicting David's sufferings at the hands of Saul, foreshadowed our Lord Jesus Christ, benefactor of the ungrateful Israelites (whom Saul represents) and pursued by their slanders; they foreshadowed the person of Judas and proclaimed the calling of all the Gentiles after Israel, for its wickedness, would be cast off from the guidance of God. Accordingly, our Lord Jesus Christ is often depicted by the prophets under the name of David; Christians are called the seed of David; the dominion of Christ the Saviour is the key of David; His throne is the throne of David; the Church of Christ is called the house of David.

The God-inspired accounts of David were afterwards gathered into one book, the Book of Psalms or Psalter; St. Athanasius of Alexandria bears witness that one of the prophets compiled it. Blessed Theodoret, in his commentary on the psalms, teaches: "Some say that not all the psalms belong to David, but some were written by others. Therefore, understanding the inscriptions in this way, some psalms they ascribed to Jeduthun, others to Ethan, others to the sons of Korah, and still others to Asaph, having learned from the Book of Paralipomenon that these also were prophets. I affirm nothing about this. For will my profit increase whether all the psalms are David's, or whether some belong

also to those mentioned before, when it is clear that all were written by the operation of the Divine Spirit? We know that the Book of Paralipomenon calls both the divine David a prophet and those others prophets. It is characteristic of a prophet to offer his tongue as an instrument of the grace of the Spirit, according to the saying in the psalms: 'my tongue is the pen of a ready writer' (Ps. 44:2). However, let the verdict of the majority prevail, and the greater part of the writers have affirmed that the psalms belong to David."

St. Basil the Great describes thus the high value of the Book of Psalms for the Christian life: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable" (2 Tim. 3:16); it was written by the Holy Spirit so that in it, as in a common infirmary of souls, all of us men might find a remedy, each for his own ailment. For it is said: "Meekness covers great sins" (Eccl. 10:4). But the prophets teach one thing, the historians another; the Law instructs in one way, and in another what is set forth in the form of an admonition in proverbs; but the Book of Psalms embraces what is profitable from all the books. It prophesies of the future, recalls events to memory, gives laws for life, and proposes rules for conduct. In a word, it is the common treasury of good teachings, and it diligently seeks out what is for the benefit of each. It heals both the long-standing wounds of the soul and, to the one recently stricken, gives swift healing; it restores what is sick and supports what is unharmed; in general, as far as is possible, it destroys the passions which, under various forms, hold sway over souls in human life. And it produces in a person a certain quiet delight and pleasure, which makes the reason chaste. A psalm is tranquility to the soul, a dispenser of peace; it calms rebellious and agitated thoughts; it softens the irritability of the soul and makes chaste its incontinence. A psalm is a mediator of friendship, a unity between those far apart, a reconciliation of those at enmity. For who can still regard as enemies the one with whom he has raised a single voice to God? Therefore the singing of psalms bestows upon us one of the greatest goods: love, devised as a shared chant in place of a bond of union, and bringing people together into one harmonious choir. A psalm is a refuge from demons, an entrance under the protection of Angels, a weapon in nocturnal fears, a repose from daily

labors, a safety for infants, an adornment in the flowering age, a consolation to the elderly, the most fitting adornment for wives. A psalm peoples the deserts and makes chaste the marketplaces. For those newly entering, it is the beginnings of teaching; for those advancing, an increase of knowledge; for the perfect, a confirmation: it is the voice of the Church. It is the wise invention of a teacher who arranges that we sing and at the same time learn what is useful. A sweetness of melodious singing is mixed with the teachings, so that, together with what is pleasant and delightful to the weary, we receive imperceptibly also what is profitable in the word. For what is learned under compulsion does not remain in us for long, but what is received with inspiration and pleasure takes root more firmly in the souls." "In the Psalms there is yet another thing worthy of wonder," teaches St. Athanasius of Alexandria. "In the other books, what the saints say, and of whom they speak, those who read refer to those precisely of whom it is written, and those who listen distinguish themselves from the persons described, of whom the account speaks; and if they marvel at and emulate the deeds related, all this becomes an imitation. But whoever takes up the Book of Psalms, if he goes through the prophecy concerning the Savior with the customary wonder and reverence, as in the other Scriptures, then he reads the remaining psalms as his own words; and the one who listens, as though speaking them himself, comes to tenderness, and all the words of the hymns become near to him, as though they were truly his own."

"Let us all praise David the king, the God-father, for from him proceeded the Rod, the Virgin, and from Her bloomed forth the Flower, Christ, and He called Adam and Eve from corruption, as the Compassionate One" (Stichera of the day, at "Lord, I have cried").

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Commemoration of St. Joseph, Betrothed of the Most Holy Virgin Theotokos

Память святого Иосифа, обручника Пресвятой Девы Богородицы

St. Joseph was of royal lineage, of the house of David and of Solomon, grandson of Matthat, great-grandson of Eliezer, son of Jacob by nature, and of Heli by law of levirate marriage[27]. For his grandfather Matthat died after the birth of his father Jacob. The wife of Matthat, the mother of Jacob, was taken in marriage by Melchi, of the tribe of Nathan, son of David, and he begat Heli. And Heli married and died childless, and after him Jacob, who was his brother by the same mother but not by the same father, took his wife, because the Law prescribed that if anyone died without children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. By this law Jacob took his brother's wife and begot this holy Joseph the betrothed, and Joseph was, as already said, the son of both: by nature of Jacob, and by law of Heli. This is why the holy Evangelist Luke, setting forth the genealogy of Christ, named Heli as the father of Joseph, speaking of Christ thus: "being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat" (Lk. 3:23–24), naming Heli instead of Jacob. — Concerning this St. Joseph there are different opinions among Western and Eastern Christians. The Western say that he remained a virgin until his death, never entering marriage at all, while the Eastern maintain that he had a wife and begot children. Thus Nicephorus, an ancient Greek historian, following St. Hippolytus, relates that he married Salome, but do not think (he adds) that this is that Salome who was in Bethlehem and was the reputed grandmother of the Lord; this was another Salome. For that one was a kinswoman of Elizabeth and of the Most Holy Theotokos, whereas this was the daughter of Aggeus, brother of Zacharias, the father of the Forerunner; Aggeus and Zacharias were sons of the priest Barachias. Having in marriage this Salome, daughter of Aggeus, St. Joseph begot four sons: James, Si-

27. The law of levirate, or levirate marriage, consisted in this: if a husband died leaving no children, his brother, surviving him, according to the ancient custom (Gen. 38 and following), was to take as his brother-in-law (jabam, levir) the widow of his brother as wife (his sister-in-law). This law is set forth by Moses in Deuteronomy (Deut. 25:5–10). It is interesting to note here that levirate exists also among many peoples of the East, for example among the Persians, Indians, Afghans, Druze, and the greater part of the Caucasian tribes, among others. According to the law of levirate, the children of a levirate marriage were considered the children of the man whose widow his brother-in-law had taken to wife under this law; this is what was meant by "raising up seed to his brother."

mon, Judas, Josiah, and two daughters, Esther and Thamar, or, as others say, Martha; and the synaxarion of the Sunday of the Holy Myrrh-bearing Women adds yet a third daughter named Salome, who was married to Zebedee. And George Kedrenus, mentioning two daughters of Joseph, says that one of them, Mary, was given in marriage to Cleopas, brother of Joseph, after Joseph's return from Egypt; but that Mary seems to be the same person as Martha or Thamar[28]. Whatever daughter she was, and however many daughters Joseph had, it is in any case certain that Joseph was married and had sons and daughters. After the death of his wife Salome, St. Joseph lived in widowhood for a considerable time, passing his days in purity. In the holy Gospel his holy and blameless life is attested by the following words, brief indeed but most commendable: "Joseph, her husband, being a righteous man" (Mt. 1:19). And what could be greater than such a testimony? He was so righteous that by his holiness he surpassed the other righteous forefathers and patriarchs. For who was worthy to become the betrothed and putative husband of the Most Pure Virgin, the Mother of God? And to whom was given such an honor, to become the putative father of Christ? Truly the Lord found this man after His own heart, to whom He revealed His "unknown and hidden wisdoms" (Ps. 50:8), making him a minister of the mystery of our salvation. Truly he was worthy of such honor and such service, by reason of the life he led, perfect in virtues. When he was already old, about eighty years of age, the Most Pure Virgin Mary was betrothed to him and entrusted to him for the keeping of Her virginity (and not for a fleshly, actual marriage). And he served Her with all reverence and fear, as the Mother of God, the Lady and Sovereign of himself and of the whole world (being assured of this by an Angel who appeared to him in a dream), and likewise served the Godchild born of Her, both during the flight into Egypt, and after the return from there, and during the sojourn in Nazareth, procuring sustenance for Them by the labors of his hands, for he was a carpenter

28. It will be appropriate to note here that in the Georgian calendar of saints, among the holy Myrrh-bearing Women, St. Tamar (under the name Tamara) is also venerated. Evidently, the tradition preserved by the Georgian Church is akin to the report according to which Tamar may have been a daughter of Joseph, and afterward a myrrh-bearer together with her sister Salome (another daughter of the righteous elder).

and a poor man, though of royal lineage. For the Lord willed to be born in poverty, taking from the royal line only the flesh, but not royal glory, wealth, or dominion. Therefore He was pleased to have His Most Pure Mother poor, and His putative father poor, thus giving an example of humility. Having lived only one hundred and ten years[29], St. Joseph peacefully fell asleep and went to his fathers who were in Sheol[30], carrying there the joyful and faithful tidings that the desired Messiah had come, who was to free and save the human race, Christ the Lord, to Whom be glory forever. Amen.

Troparion, Tone 2:

Announce, O Joseph, to David, the God-father, the wonders: thou sawest the Virgin giving birth, with the shepherds thou didst glorify, with the Magi thou didst worship, and from the Angel thou didst receive the message: pray Christ God to save our souls.

Kontakion, Tone 3:

Today David is filled with divine joy, and Joseph brings praise together with James; for having received the crown through kinship with Christ, they rejoice, and ineffably sing of Him who was born on earth: O Compassionate One, save those who honor Thee.

* * *

Commemoration of the Holy Hieromartyr Euthymius, Bishop of Sardis

Память святого священномученика Евфимия, епископа Сардийского

Saint Euthymius lived in the reign of Constantine and Irene[31], and was so renowned for his piety that he shone like a radiant star in Christ's Church through his monastic life. For this he was granted the episcopal rank[32], and he took part in the Second Council of Nicaea,

29. This tradition of the 110-year age of the Righteous Joseph is akin to the report that he reposed at the age of 111, of which we find mention in the apocryphal "History of the Carpenter Joseph."
30. Sheol: hell, the abode of the dead.
31. Constantine and Irene reigned: the former from 780 to 797, the latter from 797 to 802.
32. St. Euthymius was bishop of Sardis (in Mysia, in Asia Minor).

the Seventh Ecumenical Council[33], where he fearlessly and zealously struggled against the heretics and put them to shame. He was also sent by the emperors on various affairs of state to regions where sedition and rebellion held sway. When Nicephorus[34] came to the throne, Saint Euthymius, together with other Orthodox bishops, was exiled to Western Patalaria[35], on the pretext of having forcibly tonsured a certain maiden[36]. From that time until his death amid sufferings, he never returned to his diocese nor governed it again. Twenty-nine years later, when the savage-natured Leo[37] ascended the imperial throne of the Greek state, the saint was summoned from his confinement[38] and brought before the emperor, who interrogated him about the veneration of icons. In his customary manner, he boldly denounced the heretical impiety and pronounced excommunication upon the tyrant. The emperor was greatly enraged with the confessor and once more exiled him to the city of Ass[39]. Soon afterward Emperor Leo was deposed from the throne and perished by the sword; he was succeeded by Emperor Michael, who was called the Stammerer. Under this emperor the Venerable Father was summoned from Ass and compelled to renounce the veneration of icons. But he fearlessly proclaimed before all the following declaration:

– Whoever does not venerate the image of our Lord Jesus Christ according to His humanity, that one we anathematize.

For this he was first subjected to beating, and then exiled to Crete[40], where he was confined in a gloomy dungeon. In addition, he endured

33. This council against the iconoclasts was in 787.
34. Nicephorus reigned from 802 to 811.
35. Patalaria is an island between Sicily and Tunisia, nearer to Africa.
36. In fact, it was for denouncing the lawless emperor, who had raised persecution against all those who, together with the monks of the Studium, did not wish to have communion with the excommunicated steward Joseph, whom Emperor Nicephorus had restored, because Joseph had performed the marriage of Emperor Constantine VI with Theodote during the lifetime of his first wife.
37. Leo V the Armenian, Byzantine emperor, reigned from 813 to 820.
38. St. Euthymius, a pillar of the Church, even while in exile, according to the testimony of the Venerable Theodore the Studite, was a lamp enlightening many and drawing them to God by his honey-flowing teaching, and thus caused disquiet to the heretic emperor. Summoned from his confinement for interrogation in 815, St. Euthymius, together with Patriarch Nicephorus and the other Orthodox bishops, zealously denounced the emperor for iconoclasm.
39. Assos, a fortified city likewise in Mysia, on the Gulf of Adramyttium.

cruel torture: he was stretched upon four pillars and beaten with ox sinews, so that his body was covered with many wounds and swelled. Having lived a little while after this, the holy confessor peacefully yielded up his spirit to God[41].

* * *

Commemoration of the Venerable Evaristus

Память преподобного Евареста

Saint Evaristus, a native of Asia Minor, of the Galatian eparchy, had noble parents, but their names are unknown. At that time the emperor in the Byzantine realm was Leo, a cruel persecutor of the veneration of icons, who perished by the sword, thus meeting a fitting end as an enemy of God. His successor was Michael[42], who likewise regarded Orthodoxy with suspicious hostility.

Evaristus, as a youth, upon reaching full age, received a sufficient education and became, after the manner of the Apostle, all things to all men (1 Cor. 9:22): obedient to his parents, well-disposed toward his companions and neighbors, beloved by strangers and by his own, always and in all things truthful, and attentive to all in his love. From his youth Evaristus was thus inflamed with the desire to live according to the divine commandments, and he came to love the monastic life. Meanwhile his father set out on his affairs for Constantinople, and Evaristus went there with him. There he was received by a kinsman of his, the patrician Vrienny, who had attained an honorable social position. A few days later, the Empress Theodora needed to send an embassy to the Bulgarians[43], and the aforementioned patrician Vrienny was appointed envoy. He took the virtuous Evaristus with him. When they arrived at a certain place called Skupel[44], they stopped and remained

40. According to other reports, St. Euthymius was confined in Acrita on the Red Sea.

41. St. Euthymius reposed about 840, in the reign of Theophilus, son of Michael II the Stammerer. The relics of the holy Confessor Euthymius, according to the testimony of Nicodemus, are in Anchialus, a city in Thrace on the shore of the Black Sea, and work many miracles.

42. Emperor Michael II the Stammerer, ascending the throne in 820, delivered from confinement Patriarch Nicephorus, the Venerable Theodore the Studite, and other Orthodox who had suffered for the veneration of icons under Leo the Armenian; but he did not restore the veneration of icons, permitting only the frequent veneration of icons in homes.

there for some time. Here the blessed Evaristus, through a certain circumstance, by the providence of God, received the rank of presbyter, and then, leading an ascetic life, he also received that for which his soul had always yearned with love: he was tonsured into monasticism, thus taking upon himself the yoke of the Lord so desired by him. It happened at this time that he acquired a book of the ever-memorable Ephraim; having read it and being moved by the instruction set forth in it, Evaristus became a zealous observer of Ephraim's pious precepts. This disposition of soul and virtuous life led to his being given letters of protection for his journey, and he was sent with prayer to the Studite monastery[45]. Upon arriving at this monastery, he was received into it and wholly dedicated himself to monastic labors. Noticing one of the brethren who stood especially high in the spiritual life, he drew close to him and added labor to labor, striving with this brother in ascent to perfection, though others did not notice it. His food consisted of a small piece of bread, and that dry; cooked food Evaristus took only once a week. Of his other feats and labors it is impossible to tell in full; suffice it to mention that upon his naked body he bore heavy iron chains upon his shoulders, and his loins were girded. He surpassed all the brethren at that time in his virtuous life, and having lived so pleasing to God for seventy-five years, he yielded up his spirit to the Lord[46].

* * *

43. The Bulgars, a savage people, about 817 sacked the city of Adrianople and took captive Archbishop Manuel (his memory and that of the 377 martyrs who suffered with him is celebrated on 22 January). Afterward they were compelled to conclude peace with the Greeks and even to give hostages, among whom was the sister of the Bulgarian prince Boris. She then received a Christian upbringing in Constantinople and was baptized with the name Theodora. After 850 she returned to Bulgaria and disposed her brother toward Christianity. Thanks, among other things, to her influence, Prince Boris accepted Christianity, was baptized in 864, and named Michael.

44. Skoupi (Skopla), a locality in Albania, on the Balkan Peninsula.

45. The Studium monastery in Constantinople was founded under Emperor Leo the Great in the middle of the 5th century; under Emperor Constantine Copronymus, in the second half of the 8th century, it suffered greatly from the iconoclasts; it reached its greatest glory under the Venerable Theodore the Studite, who stood at the head of the Orthodox in the struggle with the iconoclasts. In the middle of the 15th century the Turks destroyed the monastery and turned the church into a mosque.

46. The Venerable Evarestus reposed about the year 825. He was buried in the Kokkorovion monastery.

Commemoration of the Venerable Constantine of Synnada

Память преподобного Константина Синадского

The Venerable Constantine was born in the city of Synnada[47] and was by origin a Jew. While still a child, once accompanying his mother, he saw a Christian yawn and make the sign of the Cross over his lips. Imitating him, he too began to do the same. Meanwhile, this outward likeness disposed him to attend with care also to the inner content of the Christian faith. He felt in his soul the warmth of the grace of God, and his face grew bright; illumined by a mysterious instruction from above, for many days he even seemed to forget bodily food, feeling no hunger. This became a stumbling block to those around him (1 Cor. 1:23): once a Jewish maiden boldly mocked him, but for this she was first struck dead by him through the sign of the Precious Cross, and then brought back to life. Thus, listening with a pure and believing heart to the voice of the Lord (Heb. 4:7), he left his kin and, as if by the guidance of a divine cloud[48], arrived at a place called "Soul's Salvation," where great men then dwelt, shining with virtues and monastic labors. Presenting himself to the abbot of these monks, he told him everything about himself in detail. The abbot ordered a cross to be brought and bade him kiss it. The blessed one joyfully began to kiss the holy cross and placed it upon his head, and upon his head the sign of the all-honorable weapon was at once impressed, remaining indelibly preserved even until his death. After this he was granted holy baptism and was named Constantine. After his baptism he withdrew to a nearby place and there zealously devoted himself to the labors of the spiritual life. Desiring to receive the monastic order, even before his tonsure he already surpassed all in strict piety, ordering his life after the example and instructions of the holy Apostle Paul. When Constantine uttered his monastic vows to God, the place where this took place was filled with fragrance, and the church doors opened of them-

47. Synnada or Synnades, a city in the north of Phrygia, near a mountain range, where the famous Synnadic marble quarries were located. Today its ruins lie near Eskikara: Gassaf.

48. Ex. 13:21. The place to which the Venerable one came was Mount Sina in Syria, where holy hermits had lived already in the 3rd century.

selves before him. By his purity of soul he was granted yet a special gift: he was a discerner of spirits, for even the thoughts of each brother were revealed to him. From this monastery he undertook a journey to Olympus[49], afterward came to Attalia[50], crossing a rapid river in a wondrous manner, visited Myra of Lycia and many other places, and again came to Olympus. Here Constantine spent forty days without food, being buried in the earth up to his loins. Then, against his will, he accepted the sacred rank and, not abandoning his ascetic labors, wandered further to Atroa[51]. Eight months before his death he foretold it, and according to this foretelling, he peacefully fell asleep in the Lord[52].

* * *



49. Olympus, a mountain in Asia Minor, in whose vicinity were the famous monasteries of that time, where great ascetics labored, for example Ioannicius the Great, etc.
50. Attalia, a coastal city of Pamphylia, founded half a century B.C. by Attalus II Philadelphus and named after him.
51. Atroa, a city not far from Olympus.
52. The Venerable Constantine lived and labored in the 8th century.

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 27

27 декабря

New Calendar December 27 · Old Calendar January 9 (civil dates)

Suffering of the Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen

Страдание святого первомученика и архидиакона Стефана

When our Lord Jesus Christ, having accomplished the mystery of our salvation, ascended into heaven and sent down from the Father the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire (Acts 2:1–4), and the primitive Church (of Jerusalem) began to increase, there soon arose within it a discontent between the Christians from the Hellenists[1] and the Hebrews. By "Hellenes" here are not meant those Greeks who worshipped idols and whom Holy Scripture commonly called pagans. At that time the pagans had not yet been granted access to faith in Christ, nor was the word of salvation preached to them; even after the death of the Archdeacon Stephen, the pagans were not admitted to the assembly of the faithful for a long time. The first pagan to become a Christian was Cornelius the centurion (Acts 10); but no sooner had St. Peter baptized him than the Christians from the circumcised Jews were indignant that Peter had gone in to the uncircumcised, and they murmured against him until he related to them the vision he had seen, of the sheet let down from heaven (Acts 11:5–18). Then they were pacified and glorified God, saying:

"Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life."

Thus, during the lifetime of St. Stephen, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews; these were not pagans, but were likewise of Jew-

1. "Hellenists" was the name given to Jews who lived in various countries of the pagan world and spoke the very widespread Hellenic (Greek) language; for the feast they came to Jerusalem and stayed in it for long periods.

ish descent and kept the same law given by Moses, yet had been scattered through various countries (as the holy Apostle James writes in his epistle: "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting" (Jas. 1:1)), and had adopted the Greek language (but not the faith or the customs); therefore those who lived in Jerusalem called them Hellenists. Chrysostom likewise expresses it thus: "The Hellenists, mentioned in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, were, I think, so called only because they spoke Greek, being Jews." Between such Hellenist Christians and the Jerusalem Hebrew Christians arose murmuring, because the widows of the Hellenists were neglected in the daily distribution of the ministrations: either they were assigned the lowest work, or they were given a smaller and worse portion of food and clothing.

In such a state of affairs, the holy twelve Apostles gathered all the believers then present and said to them:

"It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among yourselves seven men, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:2–4).

This proposal of the holy Apostles was approved by the whole assembly of the faithful, who at once chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a native of Antioch.

The very names of these chosen men show that they were not of the Jews who lived in Jerusalem, but of those who dwelt in Hellenic lands, for their names are not Hebrew but Greek. Of them, Stephen was a kinsman of Saul, afterwards called by the Lord, under the name of Paul, to the faith and the apostolic ministry; and Paul was a native of the city of Tarsus, in Cilicia[2]. These seven men were therefore chosen from among the Hellenists for the service of the poor widows, so that the Hellenists, who until then had grieved over the neglect of their widows, might at last be pacified and cease to complain and murmur.

2. Cilicia is a coastal region in the southeast of Asia Minor. Tarsus is the main city of Cilicia, a flourishing city to this day.

All these chosen men were brought before the Apostles, who prayed, laid their hands upon them, and ordained them deacons (ministers).

The first among them was Stephen, full of faith and power, and for this reason he was called archdeacon. By the grace of God he performed many signs and wonders among the faithful; and that his miracles are not mentioned in Holy Scripture is in no way surprising, for of the deeds of Christ the Lord Himself it is said: "If they were to be written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (Jn. 21:25). Indeed, it may be fully affirmed that St. Stephen, like the senior Apostles, laid his hands upon the sick, and they became whole. Besides this, he was a man mighty in word and deed, who confirmed the faithful in the faith and convicted the unbelieving Jews, proving to them from the Law and the Prophets that out of envy they had unjustly slain the Son of God, the Messiah, who had been expected for so many centuries. And when once a dispute broke out among the Jews, and the Pharisees, and the Sadducees, and the Grecian Jews concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, some saying that He was a prophet, others that He was a deceiver, and others that He was the Son of God, St. Stephen, mounting a platform, began to preach to all concerning Christ the Lord, saying:

"Men and brethren! Why is irritation increasing among you, and all Jerusalem being divided into factions? Blessed is he among you who has believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, for He, in order to free us from our sins, came down from heaven and was born of the Most Holy and Most Pure Virgin, chosen before the creation of the world. He took upon Himself and bore our infirmities and diseases; He gave sight to the blind, cleansed the lepers, and cast out demons."

But they, hearing his words, began to dispute with him, strove to refute him, and to revile the Lord whom he preached, as is written of this in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles:

"Some of those from the synagogue called that of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, entered into dispute with Stephen" (Acts 6:9).

For the Jews who lived among the Greeks in various distant countries had their own separate synagogues in Jerusalem. Thus, besides the chief Jewish synagogue, there were in Jerusalem many synagogues of different strangers, that is, of Jews who lived in various countries, and from each country the Jews sent their children to their own synagogue in Jerusalem to learn the Law of God. Indeed, they themselves, coming every year on pilgrimage to the Temple of Solomon, stayed at their own synagogues, gathered in them, and were taught in them, as is seen from the second chapter of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles: "Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven... Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites," and the rest (Acts 2:5–9), that is, Jews who lived in Parthia, in Media, in Elam[3], and in the other countries named there, who had now come to Jerusalem for the feast. Accordingly, there were in Jerusalem the Cilician, the Alexandrian, and the Cyrenian synagogues[4]. Of the Libertine[5] synagogue it is related that it was a particular tribe of Jews, descended from those who had once been taken captive by Pompey the Roman[6], and afterwards released to freedom, and who were therefore called "libertines," that is, free men. Likewise St. Chrysostom says: "The Libertines were those to whom liberty had been granted by the Romans. And since there lived in Jerusalem strangers from various countries, they had their own synagogues in it, where they heard the reading of the Law and prayed."

These very assemblies in the synagogues—the Libertine, the Cyrenian, and the others—disputing with Stephen, could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by whom he spoke; and holy Stephen at that time, by the word of truth, overcame the three parts of the world: Europe, Asia, and Africa. He overcame Europe in the persons of the

3. All these are provinces of former mighty kingdoms, later subjected to the Roman Empire; they lay between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf. Parthia is a large country to the southeast of the Caspian Sea. Media is the western part of Iran, south of the Caspian Sea. Elam was a country lying beyond Mesopotamia, on the other side of the Tiph and along that river south to the Persian Gulf.[1*]

4. Cyrene is a region of upper Libya, on the northern coast of Africa, west of Egypt.

5. Libertines (from the Latin: freedmen, or emancipated slaves) were Jews defeated by the Romans during their wars with them, especially under Pompey, some 60 years B.C.

6. Pompey was a famous Roman general and conqueror, who later, after the abolition of the republic in Rome, as one of the triumvirs, ruled a third part of the state autocratically.

Libertines who had come from Rome, which is in Europe; he overcame Asia in the persons of the Cilicians, natives of Asia; he overcame Africa in the persons of the Cyrenians and Alexandrians, who came from Africa.

But they, having no power to say anything against the truth preached by Stephen, brighter than the sun, were kindled to anger against him, and, full of envy, they induced some of their like-minded men, accustomed to speak lies, to declare before the chief Jewish synagogue that they had heard Stephen utter blasphemous words against Moses and God. Thus stirring up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, they fell upon St. Stephen, seized him, and brought him into the synagogue before the high priests and a great multitude of teachers of the Law; there they also presented false witnesses, who affirmed:

"This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and against the Law; for we have heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us."

But St. Stephen stood unmoved in the midst of this murderous assembly, like an Angel of God, shining with the light of divine grace, as once Moses did: for the outward appearance of his face was transfigured, and all who were in the assembly, looking upon him, saw his face as the face of an Angel.

The high priest asked him:

"Is it true, what the witnesses say about you?"

The saint, opening his lips, delivered a long speech. He began from Abraham, who first received the promise of the coming of the Messiah, and then related the whole history up to Moses, recalling him with complete reverence and respect; and by this he clearly showed and refuted the false witnesses, that he himself was in no way a blasphemer of either Moses or the Law of God given through Moses; and he proved even more clearly that it was their fathers who were the blasphemers.

"Our fathers," he said, "would not be obedient to him, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt" (Acts 7:39).

Then, answering the other calumny, that he had uttered blasphemy against the holy place, he said:

"But Solomon built Him a temple" (Acts 7:47).

By these words he seemed to wish to say: "I honor the holy place, wisely established by the will of God through King Solomon and sanctified by the glory of the Lord, manifested in the cloud; I revere the temple built by men to the glory of God; but at the same time I also confess that God more loves to dwell in incorporeal, not-made-by-hands temples, that is, in the pure souls of men."

"The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands," he said, "as God saith through the Prophet: 'Heaven is My throne, and the earth is the footstool of My feet. What house will ye build for Me, saith the Lord, and what is the place of My rest? For all these things hath My hand made'" (Is. 66:1–2).

At last, filled with divine zeal, like Elias of old, St. Stephen addressed the whole assembly with words of rebuke:

"Ye stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! Ye always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the Prophets did your fathers not persecute? They slew those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One (the promised Messiah), whose betrayers and murderers ye have now become" (Acts 7:51).

These words of the saint stirred in the high priest and the scribes an indescribable fury, and all who heard them were cut to the heart and gnashed their teeth at him.

But Stephen paid no heed to their wrath, for he was filled with the Holy Spirit, Who made him courageous and divinely inspired. Looking up to heaven, he beheld the glory of God. Until then he had been filled only with the desire to behold it, and with full faith had firmly hoped to attain this; but now, even before his death, he began to contemplate it and, as one near death, welcomed it as the beginning of blessedness. He also saw Christ Jesus Himself, his Master and Lord, standing in heaven as though awaiting his coming, that, when at last he was released from the body, he might hasten to Him; and where the Lord Himself is, there shall His servant also be.[7]

And what he saw, he declared to all, crying aloud:

"Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56).

He did not conceal this vision, as holy men were wont to do, who, surely out of humility, did not disclose the revelations sent them by God; but he proclaimed to all this most glorious revelation, so that the faithful might be confirmed in the faith and the unbelievers put to shame. He did this also to assure those who in time to come would suffer martyrdom that for those who suffer for Christ there is no hindrance to their ascent into heaven, nor any trial to be endured: the straight and open way lies before them, heaven is opened, and the reward is prepared. The Master of the contest Himself stands waiting; the glory of the Lord itself meets the martyr at the gates of heaven. Therefore the holy Protomartyr declared before all what he saw, as though thereby calling others after him to the same crown of martyrdom.

But the envious Jews, accustomed to slaying the Prophets and having risen up against the Lord Himself, the Fulfiller of the Law and the Prophets, could not endure the words of truth, being themselves false; neither would they hear the revelation of St. Stephen. Instead, they raised a loud cry, stopped their ears, and with one accord rushed upon him, laying their murderous hands upon him. They led him out of the city, as they had done the Lord Jesus, Who had been well-pleased to suffer outside the walls, and stoned the good and faithful servant of the Lord. So that they might more easily cast stones at the saint, the false witnesses and murderers took off their outer garments and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul, who, although he was of the same people and kin as the man being killed, was more incensed against him than the others, out of blind zeal for the Old Law. "And Saul," it is said in the Acts, "was consenting unto his death" (Acts 8:1). St. John Chrysostom speaks of this thus: "Saul grieved that he had not many hands, so that he might strike Stephen with them all; and he was con-

7. According to the word of the Savior. See Jn. 12:26.

tent only that the martyr was being struck by the many hands of the false witnesses, whose garments he guarded."

At the very time when St. Stephen was being slain in the valley of Jehoshaphat (which lies between Jerusalem and Eleon, by the brook Cedron, whose banks were strewn with many stones), the Most Pure Virgin stood afar off, on a certain rise, looking down from the mountain, with St. John the Theologian, and prayed earnestly to the Lord and Her Son for Stephen, that He might strengthen him in endurance and receive his soul into His hands. O how sweet, despite the cruel blows of the stones, was the death of the holy Protomartyr, when from the height of heaven the Most Sweet Jesus, and from the earthly mountain the Most Sweet Mother with Her beloved disciple, beheld his struggle! And St. Stephen, beneath the frequent shower of stones falling upon him, all drenched in blood, weakened in strength and loosed from the bonds of the flesh, grieved in his heart not for himself, but for those who were killing him; and before his death he prayed more earnestly for them than for himself. For himself, standing upright, he said:

"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). Then, kneeling down, he prayed for his murderers, crying:

"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60).

With these words the saint yielded his pure soul to Christ. Thus the good struggler came to his end; thus the first Martyr was crowned, as it were, with crimson flowers, the bloodied stones; and he entered through the opened heaven he had seen, unto the Lord and King of glory, to reign with Him in the everlasting kingdom.

He had been ordained archdeacon by the holy Apostles soon after Pentecost, and suffered in that same year, after the Lord's Ascension, on 27 December, being somewhat more than 30 years of age. He was fair of countenance, but yet fairer in soul.

His holy body was cast out to be devoured by beasts and birds, and lay unburied for a day and a night. Only on the following night did Gamaliel,[8] a Jewish teacher of the Law well known in Jerusalem (who

8. Gamaliel was a famous Jewish teacher of the law who held a high place in the Jerusalem Sanhedrin, respected by all the people, so that he was called "the glory of the law." Tradition says that he, together with his son Aviv, was baptized by the Apostles Peter and John.

himself later believed in Christ, together with his son Abib), send honourable and faithful men; secretly taking the saint's body, they carried it to his estate, which lay 20 stadia[9] from Jerusalem and was called Caphargamala, and buried it there with honour, making great lamentation over him. "And who would not weep," says Chrysostom, "at the sight of that meek lamb, stoned and lying dead?"

Many years thereafter the pious Greek Empress Eudocia, wife of Theodosius the Younger,[10] came to Jerusalem and built a beautiful church in his name[11] on the very spot where St. Stephen the Protomartyr had been slain and the earth had been reddened with his precious blood, to the honour of Christ God, to Whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Troparion, Tone 4:

Thou didst strive the good struggle, O Protomartyr of Christ and Apostle, and didst rebuke the impiety of thy persecutors; for stoned by the hands of the lawless, thou didst receive a crown from the right hand on high, and crying aloud, didst call upon God: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

Kontakion, Tone 3:

Yesterday the Master came to us in the flesh, and today the servant departeth from the flesh; yesterday He Who reigneth in the flesh was born, today the servant is stoned. Therefore the Protomartyr and divine Stephen departeth this life.

* * *

Life and Suffering of the Holy Venerable Martyr and Confessor Theodore, and His Brother, the Venerable Theophanes the Inscribed[^12]

Житие и страдание святого преподобномученика и исповедника Феодора и брата его преподобного Феофана 8814 начертанных

9. About 3½ versts.
10. Theodosius II, or the Younger, reigned from 408 to 450.
11. The church was consecrated in 460; it was so spacious that up to 10,000 people could fit in it.
12. For an image of St. Theophanes see the October volume of the "Lives of the Saints," p. 245.

Among the martyrs who suffered for Christ, some struggled for the Christian faith, standing against the pagans who defended their idolatrous delusion; others, struggling for the true faith against Christians themselves, who believed only in an unorthodox manner, endured no fewer hardships than the former, and received crowns equal to theirs. Among these latter is the wondrous and great Theodore.

Palestine nurtured Theodore, being given by God as an inheritance to Abraham and rightly called the Promised Land; for not only did the whole company of Prophets and Patriarchs come forth from it, but Christ Himself, according to the flesh, was also from there, as were the whole assembly of God-pleasing Apostles. The same land brought forth for the world this lamp of faith and pillar of piety, St. Theodore; for his noble parents,[13] whose entire estate and wealth consisted in being called Christians, dwelt in the holy city of Jerusalem.

While still young, St. Theodore acquired great wisdom, and even in his boyhood he possessed a mind beyond his years. Instead of occupying himself with children's games or being drawn to spectacles, he continually abode in the churches of God, and nothing pleased him more than to behold good and honourable deeds and learn from them. At the same time, he showed unquestioning obedience to his parents. In a word, from the beginning of his life the Venerable one, like a fruitful garden, revealed what he would be in after years.

When he had grown older, his parents sent him to the monastery of St. Sabbas,[14] to a learned and virtuous presbyter, that he might study the divine books of Holy Scripture and, together with this, be instructed in the fear of God. Theodore had a brother named Theophanes, younger than he in age but equal to him in virtue. He studied with his elder brother under the same presbyter. Possessed of a keen mind, Theodore mastered in a short time all the book-learning imparted to him. Not content with this, but seeking higher knowledge, he left the monastery and, finding an old man filled with wisdom, entreated him to

13. The father of the venerable one was the presbyter Jonah, whose memory is kept on December 5. The memory of the presbyter Jonah is observed on September 22.
14. This is the same monastery of St. Sabbas the Sanctified where the father of St. Theodore later died.

take him as a disciple. From this man St. Theodore not only fully acquired all secular learning,[15] but also gained firm proficiency in spiritual understanding. He learned from the elder to despise the world and all that is of the world; and, having mastered both disciplines—the secular and the spiritual—he returned once more to the monastery of St. Sabbas.

Having become a monk and doing deeds pleasing to God, Theodore surpassed many by his manner of life. Who there was gentler than he? Who more free of malice? Who more temperate? Who knew better the time when one must keep silent, or speak, or perform some task, so as neither to break his silence, nor lose the opportunity to say something useful at the proper time, nor neglect any work of the monastery? Who mortified his body, bridled his tongue and eyes, and repelled the assaults of thoughts to the degree that Theodore did all this? For such virtues, by God's providence and by the wish of the whole brotherhood of the monastery, the Bishop of Jerusalem ordained him to the rank of presbyter. Thus the monastery of St. Sabbas had him as a good bee, diligently gathering the honey of the virtues. Of Theodore it must further be said that he was like the Prophet Jeremiah, to whom it was said: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee" (Jer. 1:5). For when he, still a youth, lived in the Lavra[16] and was taught letters by the aforementioned presbyter, that God-inspired man prophesied concerning him that this fair youth would complete his earthly ascetic life by a martyr's death for Christ. This came to pass afterwards, as the further narrative will show.

At that time the iconoclastic heresy flared up again, which had been eradicated from the Church after Leo the Isaurian[17], Constantine Copronymus[18] and his son Leo[19], and had been anathematized by the VII Ecumenical Council[20], convened by the pious Empress Irene and her son Constantine[21]. This heresy was restored by the impious Emperor

15. "External wisdom" is the same as worldly wisdom, which was so called in distinction from religious knowledge, called spiritual, inner wisdom.
16. The Lavra or monastery of St. Sabbas.
17. Emperor Leo the Isaurian (717–741) was the first iconoclast, who issued the command to throw the holy icons out of the churches and destroy them.

Leo the Armenian[22], about whose earlier life it will be fitting to say a few words here. In the reign of Nicephorus[23] he was at first commander of the Armenian guard, and afterwards a distinguished dignitary and leader of the Eastern army. Then by cunning he ascended the throne, overthrowing the good and pious Emperor Michael, surnamed Rhangabe[24], whom he compelled to take monastic vows; at the same time he castrated Michael's sons Ignatius and Theophylact, and sent Michael with his wife and children into confinement.

When the Most Holy Patriarch Nicephorus crowned Leo the Armenian as emperor in the cathedral church and placed the crown upon his head, he felt in his hands a pain as from thorns, as if the crown in the hierarch's hands had become a crown of thorns that caused painful stabs; and the Most Holy Patriarch understood then that this was a clear sign of the great sorrows and calamities which this emperor would afterwards bring upon the Church of Christ.

At first the crafty emperor concealed the heresy hidden within him and seemed as if pious, until he had grown firm upon the throne. But after the great war with the Bulgarians, in which he appeared as a glorious victor, he at last poured forth the poison of malice that lay hidden within him, openly showing himself an iconoclast. It began thus: returning from the war, the emperor recalled a certain recluse who had once foretold to him that he would be emperor, which had come to pass. Intending to repay him for this prophecy, the emperor sent him, by a trusted servant, various gifts: gold and silver vessels, various dishes and Indian spices[25]. But the imperial messenger no longer found this

18. Emperor Constantine Copronymus (741 to 775) strongly supported the iconoclastic heresy. He convened in Constantinople a council, which he called Ecumenical, at which the veneration of icons was rejected.

19. Emperor Leo, surnamed the Khazar, reigned from 775 to 780. He supported iconoclasm, but weakly.

20. The VII Ecumenical Council was convened at Nicaea in 887. It confirmed the veneration of icons and declared the council held under Constantine Copronymus heretical.

21. St. Irene, the consort of Leo the Khazar, first governed the empire after her husband's death on behalf of her young son, the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus (from 780 to 792), in his name, and afterward in her own (from 797 to 802).

22. The Emperor Leo the Armenian reigned from 813 to 820.

23. The Emperor Nicephorus I reigned from 802 to 811.

24. The Emperor Michael I Rhangabe reigned from 811 to 813.

monk, for he had died, and in his place his disciple Sabbatius lived in the same cell. The imperial messenger began to persuade him to accept the imperial gifts sent to his teacher and to pray for the emperor. But Sabbatius rejected the gifts, and together with them the one who had brought them, and called the emperor unworthy of the imperial throne because he venerated icons and obeyed the dogmas established by the former Empress Irene and the late Patriarch Tarasius. In doing so the wretch reviled Irene and Tarasius, calling the first a lynx and the second a stirrer of the people; and to Emperor Leo he threatened the speedy loss of his kingdom and of his life, if within a short time he did not reject the icons as idols.

Returning to the emperor, the messenger told him all he had heard from the black-robed monk and also delivered a written message from him on the same subject. In perplexity the emperor summoned one of his most trusted counselors, named Theodotus, son of the Melissenian patrician Michael[26], surnamed Cassiteras, and took counsel with him alone as to what to do. Theodotus had long been infected with the iconoclastic heresy and was only waiting for a convenient occasion to openly confess his impiety. He gave the emperor the following counsel:

"In the Dagistheus monastery," he said, "there lives a holy monk, a wonderworker and clairvoyant: one should speak with him and act as he advises."

When the emperor agreed with him, Theodotus secretly hastened to the Dagistheus monastery to the monk he had designated, who was a heretic. Coming to him, he said:

"The emperor will come to you tonight in shabby clothes, to converse about the faith and other matters and to receive from you wise counsel. You, however, persuade him to accept the rejected dogmas of the former Emperor Leo the Isaurian and to cast the idols (so the wretch called the holy icons) out of God's churches. Then try to frighten him, that if he does not do this, he will shortly lose both his kingdom

25. *Indian aromatics*: aromatics brought from India. India is the country on the great southern peninsula of eastern Asia, long famed for its fragrant plants.
26. Melissa: a city in Phrygia, which embraced the whole central part of the western half of the Asia Minor peninsula.

and his life; but if he promises to carry it out, then prophesy to him a long life and a prosperous reign."

Thus the heretic Theodotus and the heretic monk agreed to draw the emperor, whose heart was inclined to their design, into their impiety. Knowing nothing of Theodotus's deceit, the emperor rose at night and, in shabby clothes (so as not to be recognized), went to this false wonderworker and lying prophet. His guide was the same Theodotus. When they came to the aforementioned monk and the conversation had begun, the monk, standing near the emperor and as if by divine revelation recognizing his imperial rank, exclaimed in astonishment:

"You have not acted well, O emperor, in concealing from us under shabby garments your imperial dignity. But although you have so acted, the grace of the Spirit of God did not allow us to remain long in ignorance, and revealed that you are an emperor and not a common man."

The emperor was struck with terror at these words, and, becoming convinced of the monk's holiness and clairvoyance, he believed in his prophetic gift and his power to work miracles. He readily inclined to what the monk commanded, having no doubt whatever about all that his lips prophesied, and accepting as wholesome and profitable to the soul the deadly counsel of the heretic, full of serpent's venom. He immediately promised to carry out all the counsel of the monk, who had been instructed by the heretic Theodotus, who was like him; and he went away full of the evil intention of raising a persecution against the holy icons. And so, like a violent storm, the impious emperor began to disturb the peace of the Church of Christ.

The Most Holy Patriarch Nicephorus, who did not indulge his impious purpose, he sent into confinement at Proconnesus[27]; likewise he exiled and imprisoned in remote lands Theophanes, abbot of the monastery known as the Great Village[28], as well as Theodore the Studite[29] and many other great and God-inspired fathers who strongly opposed

27. Proconnesus: an island in the Sea of Marmara, now Mariara; it served as a place of exile for many confessors during the iconoclast disturbances.

28. St. Theophanes, the son of a Constantinopolitan nobleman, who was tonsured into the monastic life after the death of the Emperor Leo the Khazar, under whom he had held a high position. His memory is celebrated on 12 March in the wooded Sigrian mountains, on the bank of the River Rhyndacus.

him. Upon the patriarchal throne he raised, on the very day of the Resurrection of Christ, the aforementioned heretic Theodotus of Melissa, surnamed Cassiteras. And he became as "the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place" (Mt. 24:15; Dan. 9:27).

Then God, in His righteous wrath at the emperor's impiety, did not delay to punish him by His judgment, and permitted a sudden invasion of foreign tribes. These were the Arabs dwelling in the eastern deserts, who gathered all their strength, invaded the Greek regions, laying waste the lands, attacking the Palestinian monasteries and, among others, the monastery of St. Sabbas, where the blessed Theodore lived as a monk together with his brother Theophanes. The Most Holy Patriarch of the holy city of Jerusalem understood that this was a punishment for sins and a consequence of God's wrath for the dishonoring and rejection of the holy icons. Moved by zeal for Orthodoxy, he began to seek how to quench this flame and to expose the evil wrought by those who violate the paternal traditions by introducing innovations. After some searching, he found a suitable man for this task in the person of the Venerable Theodore, known for his righteous life and wisdom, breathing divine zeal and standing with unwavering courage as a guardian of Orthodoxy. Having fortified him with prayer and established him in hope in Christ, the patriarch sent him to the imperial city to expose the lawlessness.

The Blessed Theodore, as an obedient son, did not refuse to carry out the command. Ready to bear for the true faith not only many labors, but also to endure suffering and even to lay down his soul for the honor of the holy icons, he obeyed with joy. Taking with him his brother Theophanes, Theodore set out on the journey and soon reached the imperial capital. Here he first of all boldly denounced as a heretic the hireling who was not a shepherd, that is, Theodotus of Melissa, the false Patriarch of Constantinople. The Venerable Father openly reproached him for corrupting those whom he governed, for destroying the rational sheep of Christ's flock, which were fed on the harmful food of heretical teaching, and for laying waste the Church of orthodoxy by

29. Theodore the Studite: abbot of the famous Stoudios Monastery. His memory is celebrated on 11 November.

building a shrine of false belief. Then, standing before the emperor himself, and having in his mouth the divine word, which is like a sharp sword, Theodore began to admonish the emperor, clearly proving to him that he was not only destroying his own soul but was also leading God's people with him into perdition by corrupting them through deceit. At the same time he implored him to return once more to piety and to abandon his impious reasoning.

"Perhaps," he said, "in this way you will appease the Lord, and will not drink to the dregs the cup of God's wrath which hangs over you."

Astonished at the free speech of the man, the persuasiveness of his words, the gentleness of his nature and his fearless boldness, the emperor received the rebuke meekly. Summoning him a second time, the emperor began to converse with him in a friendly manner, asking who he was, whence he had come, and what he hoped to achieve by his bold speech. Telling the emperor of his homeland and of his arrival from Palestine, the saint also related the reason for his coming: namely, that he had come to him on purpose to stand openly for the honor of God, seeing how the King of Heaven was dishonored in His icons and insulted in the persons of His servants who were unjustly persecuted.

"It is not fitting," he said, "to fear an earthly king more than the heavenly one; it is our duty to rebuke kings when they provoke God to anger."

Then the Venerable Father began to set forth the dogmas of the holy faith and to teach that the divine icons are to be given due veneration. Citing many passages from Holy Scripture, he added that the veneration of the holy icons is a sign of our love and of our striving toward Christ, and also a testimony of our faith and of our confession of His Incarnation. The emperor disputed with him at length and raised many objections from his heretical position, but without success, for the words of the divine man were firm as adamant, and his faith was unshaken, like a solid wall. After a long dispute, Theodore defeated the emperor in argument and proved to him the injustice of his views. What then did the crafty emperor do? He resolved to shake the unshakable by flattery, trying by entreaty, by gifts and by the promise of honors to win Theodore over to agreement with himself, but he had no suc-

cess. After many exhortations on the emperor's part, the saint said to him boldly and without fear:

"You have forgotten your vows, O emperor, which you gave to God when the hierarch placed the crown upon your head. Spare your soul, restore to the Church her adornment, and do not make war against God, the just and mighty Judge!"

Then the emperor exchanged his treacherous meekness for his natural bestial fury, which was in keeping with his name. He commanded that the confessor of Christ, Theodore, and his brother Theophanes be beaten long and severely, and then he exiled them to confinement at the mouth of the sea, forbidding anyone to give them food, drink or clothing, so that, as the impious emperor said, "the wicked might perish by an evil death."

But while the saints suffered for Christ's icons, tormented by cold, hunger and thirst, "the God to whom vengeance belongs, the Lord" did not delay to repay the lawless man by His righteous judgment. Before long, he who shared with the beasts both their name and their cruelty perished by their common death, for he was stabbed like a beast. This end had been foreshadowed in a special revelation which the emperor's mother received shortly before the death of her impious son. For many years she had been a widow and had lived a life of abstinence. Once in a dream she had the following vision: it seemed to her that she was going into the Church of the Most Pure Virgin Theotokos at Blachernae[30], and, entering the door, she met a certain most radiant Virgin, surrounded by a multitude of men in white robes, while the church was flooded with streams of blood. The Virgin bade one of the men clothed in white robes to draw blood, fill an earthen vessel with it, and give it to the mother of the impious emperor to drink. Seeing this, the emperor's mother said with horror:

30. Blachernae: a district of Constantinople on the western side of the city. In the days of the flourishing of the Byzantine Empire it was famed throughout the East for its shrines. Blachernae was especially renowned for the Church of the Mother of God, built by the Emperor Leo I the Great (from 457 to 474), under whom, in 474, the precious robes of the Most Holy Theotokos, transferred from Palestine, were laid in this church. Here, together with the garment of the Theotokos, there were also preserved in a reliquary of hammered gold her head-covering (maphorion) and a part of her girdle.

"For many years, because of my widowhood, I have not eaten meat, and I do not take anything bloody into my mouth. How then shall I drink this blood?"

Then the most radiant Virgin asked her with anger:

"Why does your son not cease to be filled with blood, and thereby provoke Me and My Divine Son to anger?"

Here the dream was broken off, and the emperor's mother at once awoke in fear and trembling. From that time on she unceasingly and with tears exhorted her royal son to cease casting down the holy icons and shedding Christian blood on their account. But the second Judas, the obedient slave of heresy and the crafty deceiver, remained incorrigible.

Soon after this there was a second vision, this time to the emperor himself, six days before his agonizing end. There appeared to him in a vision the most holy Tarasius, who had died long before and had been patriarch in the reign of Irene and Constantine. In great anger, Tarasius in the vision commanded a certain man named Michael to strike the emperor with a sword. Carrying out the command, Michael dealt the emperor a powerful blow with the sword and pierced him through. The emperor saw all this himself and awoke in great trembling, wondering what this could mean.

Thinking that in the monastery of Saint Tarasius there lived some Michael who was plotting to kill him, he at once sent for the monks, and, making inquiry about Michael, ordered them to be held in chains until they should present to him the Michael who was among them.

At this time there lived in Constantinople a certain voivode named Michael, surnamed Travlei or Balbos[31], a native of Amorium[32]. Formerly he himself had greatly helped Leo to attain the imperial throne, had been faithful to him and beloved by him, so that Leo had even become godfather to his son. But afterward, angered at the emperor for some reason, Michael exchanged friendship for enmity, and, feasting with his friends, often while drunk, he carelessly spoke evil of

31. The name: Traulos is Latin, and Balbus (Balbos) is Greek. In Russian both mean "the Stammerer." This Michael later became emperor and reigned from 820 to 829.
32. Amorion: a city in the Asia Minor province of Phrygia.

the emperor. Seeing that Michael was hostile toward the emperor, some of the emperor's secret enemies joined him, and their number was not small; they conspired to kill the emperor and to raise Michael to the throne. Being intemperate in his tongue, Michael did not conceal this, but somewhere he boasted that he would be emperor. This word reached the emperor, and he at once seized Michael and condemned him to be burned alive. Michael, bound, was already being led to the bath-furnace, near which the emperor was present, wishing to see his death with his own eyes. This was on December 24, on the eve of the Nativity of Christ. The emperor's wife, Theodosia, learning of this, hastily came out of her chambers and began to reproach the emperor with anger, even calling him God-hating because he did not honor even the holy day on which he was to partake of the Divine Mysteries. The emperor obeyed her and ordered Michael to be brought back, postponing his burning to another time, and then, turning to the empress, he said:

"I have acted as you commanded, wife, and today I have obeyed your angry admonition, but you yourself and our children will see what will come after."

By these words the lawless emperor unwittingly uttered a prophecy concerning himself, for his end was near.

The emperor entrusted the guarding of the bound Michael to one of the palace guards, named Papias, and he himself took the keys to the prisoner's fetters and spent the whole of that night without sleep and in sorrow—his spirit grieved, not knowing what to do. Rising, the emperor went to see the prisoner: what was he doing—was he weeping and lamenting, as condemned men are wont to do? Quietly opening the secret door into Papias's room, he saw something entirely unexpected: Michael, whom he had expected to find lamenting and sorrowing, was sleeping deeply on a high and richly adorned bed of Papias, while Papias himself was dozing on the bare ground. The emperor was seized with horror at seeing the condemned prisoner in such honor and tranquillity, and he withdrew in anger, threatening to destroy not only Michael but Papias as well. A certain lad who was in the same room heard this. Recognizing the emperor, he woke Michael and Papias and told them that the emperor had come and had threatened to destroy them

both. All were in fear. Then Michael, without any resistance on the part of Papias, sent to his fellow conspirators a certain Theoctistus with the command to say to them:

"If you do not now, without delay, carry out what we have planned, then tomorrow I will tell the emperor about you and will denounce each one of you individually, so that not only I shall perish an evil death, but you will all die together with me."

The accomplices in the conspiracy were frightened by such a threat, and, assembling, began to consider how they might save both themselves and Michael from the impending danger and death. It was midnight, and in the churches the customary All-night Vigil before the Nativity of Christ was beginning. Having taken counsel, they hid their weapons beneath their garments and went to the so-called elephant trees, which led into the imperial palace. Mingling there with the imperial choristers who were entering the palace chapel through these doors, they went into the church together with them, as if to the Vigil. The emperor also came into the church and, standing on the right choir, as he usually did, he himself began the church chanting, having a very loud voice.

They were already singing the canon, and the seventh ode was drawing near, when the conspirators began to say quietly to one another:

"Why do we stand here idle? The singing will soon be over. What are we waiting for?"

At that very moment the emperor loudly began the seventh irmos of the second canon for the Feast of the Nativity of Christ. One of the conspirators then drew a sword from beneath his garment and rushed at the emperor, but he made a mistake: instead of the emperor he struck the leader of the right choir, either because the man was of the same height as the emperor or because, owing to the cold, he had his head covered as the emperor did. When the leader uncovered his head, the mistake became plain. The emperor himself, seeing their design, ran into the sanctuary, and seizing the cross, began to defend himself with it in the doorway, warding off the blows of the conspirators. But then there came up a terrible soldier of enormous stature. On seeing

this soldier, the emperor began to adjure him by the sanctuary of God not to do him harm.

"Now is the time not for adjurations but for murder," the man answered, and struck Leo the Armenian a powerful blow with his weapon, cruelly wounding him and cutting off his hand together with the end of the cross. Then the other soldiers began to hack the emperor all over his body. Falling to the floor, Leo lay in a pool of his own blood and was still breathing. Seeing that he was still alive, one of the soldiers cut off his head.

Thus, slaughtered like a beast, the lawless emperor at the break of day breathed out his spirit in cruel torments. He was killed in the very place where he had first dared to cast down, spit upon and trample under foot the image of the Savior. Leo the Armenian had reigned seven years and five months, and in his cruelty he equalled the great persecutors of the Church of old. After the murder his body was thrown out into the city square, where it lay unclaimed the whole day. No one grieved over his death, and the whole city rejoiced.

It is also related that at the very hour when this accursed reviler of icons was slain, a joyful voice was heard from heaven, announcing to many the death of the impious emperor. Some sailors who heard this voice noted the hour, and later learned that at that very time the bloodthirsty man, fittingly named after beasts, had indeed perished. As for his children, what he had done to the children of his predecessor, Emperor Michael Rhangabe, befell them in doubled measure. As has already been said above, he had castrated two sons of Michael; in the same way his four sons were castrated: Basil, who was given the name Constantine and destined to reign, Sabbatius, Gregory and Theodosius. The last did not survive the illness that followed the castration and died, and was buried together with his father; Basil, called Constantine, was rendered mute by the same illness. All of them were imprisoned together with their mother.

After the killing of Leo, the soldiers went to Michael and seated him on the imperial throne with fetters on his feet (for the key to the fetters, as has been said, was kept by Emperor Leo himself).

Then, when day had already come, they broke the fetters and led him to the cathedral. Thus Michael Travlei was crowned emperor on the very day of the Nativity of Christ.

Soon after Michael's accession, all the confessors of Christ were released from imprisonment and returned home without hindrance. Although the new emperor Michael was not Orthodox and was an adherent of the same iconoclastic heresy, he did not persecute the Orthodox, allowing each person freedom to believe in his own way. He was a man ignorant of the word of God, did not occupy himself with reading books, and was wholly immersed in worldly vanity and the cares of life.

The Blessed Theodore and his brother Theophanes, however, returned not to their homeland of Palestine but to Constantinople, the field assigned to them for preaching, and began to confess piety openly, turning many away from the iconoclastic heresy and instructing them in the true faith.

At that time there lived in Constantinople a certain man named John[33], who held the same heresy as the emperor and enjoyed great influence with him. Wearing the garb of a monk and hypocritically showing himself as a model of virtues, he deceived not only the emperor but also many members of the supreme government, so that they listened to him and followed his crafty counsels in everything. He ascended the patriarchal throne in succession to the heretic Theodotus, being himself a heretic of the same kind. Unwilling to see Theodore and Theophanes, those two lamps of Orthodoxy who illumined the whole imperial city, at liberty, he cast them into prison; then, summoning them to him for conversation, he argued at length with them, but being unable to overcome them, he expelled them from the city, obtaining for this a special imperial decree (for he was the teacher and first counselor of the emperor). By this decree the holy Theodore and Theophanes were sent into exile in a land known as Sosthenion[34]. But for the venerable confessors a foreign land became, for Christ's sake, as it were a fatherland, for they were everywhere ready to suffer for the icons of Christ.

33. Here is meant John the Grammarian, tutor of the Emperor Theophilus, afterward (from 832 to 842) Patriarch of Constantinople; he died in confinement.
34. Sosthenion: a locality in the vicinity of Constantinople.

Soon after this Emperor Michael died, leaving on the throne his son Theophilus[35], who was more zealous than others in his adherence to the iconoclastic heresy and again stirred up persecution of the Church. Once more the holy icons began to be cast out and given over to insult; once more torments, prisons and courts were prepared for the Orthodox; once more all kinds of unjust tortures were renewed. Many, frightened by the torments, submitted, although they afterwards repented. At this time new sufferings also befell Theodore. The emperor learned that he was unshaken in his confession and invincible in his word, and that, as he himself honored the icons, so he taught others to do likewise[36]. Immediately the impious emperor ordered the Venerable Theodore to be brought to judgment, and so, by imperial command, the blessed man was brought, together with his brother Theophanes and other Orthodox, before the city prefect to be tortured. When, after a long verbal dispute, flattery and threats from the governor, Theodore did not yield to his persuasions, the blessed man was stripped and for a long time severely beaten with thick whips. When the tormentors ceased beating him, he stood naked and bloodied in the midst of the court, adorned before Angels and men with the wounds received for Christ. The prefect found this spectacle unseemly, but the saint said:

"I am a wrestler, and I have come out to wrestle with the enemies of my Lord for the icons; and wrestlers, as a rule, go out to the contest naked. If I see any of the faithful now suffering wounds at your hands faltering, I shall at once put my own body under the blows in his stead, and thereby make up for his lack of endurance. This is why I stand naked!"

O strong man! O free speech! O zeal for God! After that Theodore and his brother were again sent into exile, to Aphusia[37]. Who could recount the sufferings they endured on the way and in that place: chains, storms, hunger, the heat of the sun, the night frost, slanders, daily dying, and uprisings? Who could count in detail the new wounds, blows,

35. The Emperor Theophilus reigned from 829 to 842.

36. Monuments of this enlightening activity of St. Theodore are the instructions that have survived from him. There is also ascribed to him the "Reflection on the Veneration of Icons" and the book "On the Orthodox Faith."

37. Aphousia, otherwise Ophiussa: an island near Constantinople.

and buffetings? It is enough to say that for Christ's sake they bore all these torments with joy, together with the long exile.

Two years passed, and they were again brought to Constantinople by imperial order and presented for examination before the emperor himself, for he greatly wished to win them over to his heresy. What they endured at that time is evident from the epistle they wrote afterwards to John, Bishop of Cyzicus[38]. In this epistle they themselves relate the following about themselves: "When we were brought into the imperial palace and entered the door, the emperor appeared to us very terrible and breathing wrath. A multitude of courtiers surrounded us on every side, and we bowed to the emperor from afar.

He, with a fierce voice and in harsh terms, bade us come nearer to him, and asked:

"In what country were you born?"

When we answered, "In the land of Moab"[39], he asked again:

"Why then have you come here?"

And before we could answer, he ordered us to be struck on the face. For a long time they buffeted us with heavy blows, so that we almost fell to the floor; and if I had not seized the garment of the man who was striking me (says Theodore), I would have fallen at the foot of the imperial throne; but holding to his garment, I stood motionless under the blows. When they ceased striking us, the emperor again asked:

"Why have you come here?"

We were silent and looked down, for we had not yet recovered from the suffering caused by the blows. Then the emperor, burning with great anger, turned furiously to the governor standing nearby, and, using indecent abuse, said:

"Take them away from here, and having branded their faces, hand them over to two Saracens[40], so that they may lead them into their own land."

38. Cyzicus: a city in the northwestern part of Asia Minor, on the southern shore of the Sea of Marmara.

39. The land of Moab was in Palestine, on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. Its boundaries were: on the west, the Dead Sea; on the north, the tribe of Reuben; on the east, the Arabian desert; on the south, Idumea.

40. Thus all Muslims were called by Christian writers, and especially the Arabs.

Not far off stood a certain versifier, holding in his hands a sheet of paper with ready-made verses written about us.

The emperor bade him read them and added:

"If the verses are poor, do not be troubled by this."

He answered:

"Even such verses are enough for their disgrace." Someone among those present remarked further:

"They are not worthy, O master, even of the better ones."

Then the following verses were read:

Since everyone loves to visit the city
Where the most pure feet of the Word of God stood
for the restoration of the universe,
these have appeared in that most honorable place,
these crafty and unclean vessels.
Having done there much that is shameful,
through unbelief and impiety,
they have been driven away from there as apostates;
but having fled into the reigning city,
they have not here abandoned their frenzied violence.
Therefore, branded on their faces as malefactors,
they are condemned and again cast out.

Having heard the reading of the verses, the emperor commanded that we be led away under guard (so the saints spoke of themselves). When we went out, someone overtook us, and ordering us to return, hastily brought us back to the emperor.

Seeing us, the emperor said:

"I think that as you left you were saying to yourselves that we had mocked the Emperor. But first I myself will mock you, and then I will let you go."

Having said this, he ordered us to be stripped. After we were both stripped, they began to beat me first (says Theodore), while the Emperor himself assisted the torturers and kept crying out without ceasing:

"Beat harder!"

They beat me on the shoulders and on the chest without any mercy or pity. While they beat me, I cried out loudly:

"We have sinned against you in nothing, O Emperor!"

And also:

"Lord, have mercy! Most Holy Theotokos, come to our aid!"

Then they began to beat my brother, who cried out in a similar manner:

"Most Holy Theotokos, who fled with Thy Son into Egypt, look upon my sufferings! O Lord, Lord, who deliverest the weak from the hands of the stronger, take not Thy help away from us!"

Having mocked us to his heart's content, the Emperor again ordered us to be led away under guard.

All this the valiant sufferers themselves wrote concerning themselves to the Bishop of Cyzicus.

Four days later, they were again brought before the eparch, who said to them kindly:

"Only partake of the Holy Mysteries once with us, and I will let you go wherever you wish."

But the blessed Theodore answered him:

"Your proposal, eparch, is like someone saying to me: I beg of you one thing, only allow me to cut off your head, and then you may go wherever you wish. Know that to turn us from the orthodox faith is as difficult as to move heaven and earth so that the earth is above and the heaven below."

Then the eparch ordered that the aforementioned verses be branded upon their faces. The wounds the sufferers had recently received had not yet healed and caused them terrible pain. Nevertheless, they were stretched out on boards face upward, and their faces were pricked with specially prepared instruments, the aforementioned verses being punched into them. They were tormented with this branding the whole day, and only when the sun set and dusk came did the tormentors cease their torture. As they left the eparch, the branded sufferers said:

"Know, all of you who are here, that the Cherub who stands guard over paradise will withdraw at our coming, seeing these marks on our faces, and will lower his flaming sword, opening to us free access to paradise. For from of old there has not been this new torment that has been inflicted on us today. And in any case these marks will be upon

the face of Christ, and the guilt in this will fall on you, for He says: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me' (Mt. 25:40)."

After this new and inhuman torment, endured for the holy icons, while the blood had not yet ceased to flow, the saints were cast into prison, and then, by the command of the aforementioned John, who was at that time patriarch, they were again exiled into confinement at Apamea in Bithynia[41]. At the same time an order was given that, when they died there, their bodies were not to be granted burial, but were to be cast far outside the city like the carcasses of animals. On the way to the place of their confinement, it so happened that the holy confessors passed the island where at that time Saint Methodius, also imprisoned for the holy icons, lived. He sat there locked in a tomb-cave with two robbers and received his food from a certain fisherman. Having chanced to meet this fisherman on the road, the saints learned all about Saint Methodius from him. Unable to see him, because of the cruelty of the soldiers accompanying them, they wrote and sent to him, through the same fisherman, the following short poem:

To the living dead man and the dead life-giver,
Who lives on earth and treads upon the earth,
The branded prisoners write to a prisoner.

Saint Methodius was comforted in spirit on reading these verses, and, learning further about the venerable passion-bearers from the fisherman's account, he gave thanks to God, who had strengthened them for such a feat, and wrote back to them in verse the following:

To the two written in the heavenly books,
Sealed upon the face,
Those who were buried before death,
Greets the fellow prisoner, living-buried.

Led by the soldiers, the venerable ones reached Apamea, bearing upon their brows the trustworthy marks of their pious faith in Christ, and there they were cast into prison. Already advanced in years, the venerable Theodore was worn out here by numerous wounds and the

41. Apamea of Bithynia was so called in distinction from Apamea of Syria. Bithynia is a northwestern region of Asia Minor.

labors he had endured. On the day of the memory of the holy first martyr Stephen he fell asleep in the Lord and passed into eternal rest, leaving his most long-suffering body in the chains borne for Christ. The venerable Theophanes, his brother in flesh and in spirit, having wept over his separation from his brother and sung the funeral chants over him, laid him in a wooden coffin. It is related that a certain elder, great in virtues, happened to be at Apamea at the time of the repose of the venerable Theodore, and heard Angelic singing, proclaiming from on high the solemn ascent of the martyr's soul into heaven together with the Angels.

After the death of the Emperor Theophilus, peace was granted to the Church. The pious Empress Theodora, together with her son Michael[42], brought back from exile all the holy fathers and bestowed honor and praise upon them. Then Saint Theophanes was also freed from imprisonment. He came to Constantinople with the others, bearing upon his brow the marks of his victory over heresy, and was honored among the holy fathers as a Cherub among the Angels. In the first week of the holy Great Lent the holy icons were brought into the church with great solemnity[43]. For this festival the blessed Theophanes wrote and sang a beautiful canon[44].

Then he was appointed metropolitan of the city of Nicaea and ordained by the holy Patriarch Methodius, the very one who had earlier been imprisoned in the tomb-cave. Thus the light of Orthodoxy shone forth, and by the grace of Christ the darkness of the iconoclastic heresy, which for 120 years had troubled and obscured God's Church, was completely driven away.

Soon after this the relics of the confessor of Christ, the venerable Theodore[45], were transferred from Apamea to Chalcedon[46], and from

42. The Emperor Michael III (from 842 to 867) ascended the throne at the age of four, and therefore the state until 855 was governed by his mother, St. Theodora the Empress.

43. This was on 19 February, 842. This day was named the day of the triumph of Orthodoxy, and it was ordained to be celebrated annually on the first Sunday of the Great Fast.

44. St. Theophanes left behind many writings in defense of Orthodoxy; he is especially known as a writer of canons, the number of which reaches 148. His best canons are the canon for the Sunday of Orthodoxy, all the canons to the Apostles, and for the departed. Besides these, St. Theophanes also wrote stichera for certain days.

them many healings were granted, to the glory of Christ God, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit unto ages of ages. Amen.

* * *

Memory of St. Theodore, Archbishop of Constantinople

Память святого Феодора, архиепископа Константинопольского

St. Theodore was a native of Constantinople, where he also received his upbringing. When he reached maturity, he was first, for his great piety, ordained to the rank of presbyter of the "Great" church[47]; then he was made synkellos[48] and skeuophylax[49]. After the death of the most holy Patriarch of Constantinople, he was compelled by all the boyars, by the Emperor himself, and especially by the Holy Council, to take the administration of the Church into his hands, and was raised to the rank of Patriarch of Constantinople[50]. After some time, through the malicious slanders of his enemies, he was deposed from the patriarchal throne, but afterward the truth triumphed, and St. Theodore was again raised to the patriarchal throne[51]. Having well governed the Church of God, he departed peacefully to the Lord after a little more than two years[52].

* * *

45. This was still during the lifetime of his brother Theophanes, who wrote for St. Theodore a canon with an acrostic: "Thy true praises, brother, I weave."
46. Chalcedon: it lay opposite Constantinople, on the Asia Minor shore of the Bosphorus.
47. That is, of the Cathedral of St. Sophia.
48. Synkellos: a member of the patriarchal council, who managed the affairs of church administration. Synkelloi carried out various commissions of the patriarchs, were direct witnesses of their lives, constantly remaining beside them, and after their death were often their successors.
49. Skeuophylax: keeper of the sacred vessels, sacristan.
50. This was in 676.
51. St. Theodore was deposed from the patriarchal throne in 678 and restored in 683.
52. St. Theodore reposed around 686.

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 28

28 декабря

New Calendar December 28 · Old Calendar January 10 (civil dates)

Suffering of Twenty Thousand Martyrs, Burned at Nicomedia

Страдание двадцати тысяч мучеников, в Никомидии сожженных

In the second year of the reign of the Emperor Maximian[1], when a cruel persecution of Christians was already being prepared, the holy Faith of Christ was being well-ordered and was flourishing, and the God-bearing pastors and teachers of the Church openly confessed the Orthodox dogmas. Among them at that time was the holy Cyril, the glorious Bishop of the Church of Nicomedia[2], adorned with a righteous life and the gift of the word. Spreading through his preaching, the Christian faith had already begun to reach even the imperial palace. Many of the emperor's closest servants began to turn away from the idols and to turn to Christ. Learning of this, Maximian resolved at once to raise persecution against the Church of Christ, but at this time he had a war with the barbarians before him; therefore he decided first to take up arms against external enemies and conquer them, and then to declare an internal war, not against enemies but against his own subjects and faithful helpers, the Christians, who strengthened the fatherland by their prayers and right faith. When he left Nicomedia, setting out for war against the Ethiopians, the light of the holy faith shone still more brightly, enlightening the unbelievers; and meanwhile the host of Christ grew in number and prepared itself for the coming struggle.

1. Maximian II Galerius, son-in-law and co-ruler of the Roman emperor Diocletian, afterwards his successor (305–311).
2. Nicomedia, a flourishing city of Asia Minor on the shore of the Sea of Marmara, the capital of the eastern half of the Roman Empire under Diocletian and his successors.

At that time there was in Nicomedia a certain beautiful maiden, raised in the imperial chambers, named Domna. The emperor entrusted her to his impure gods, having bound her to keep her virginity, and made her the chief idol-priestess at his palace.

By God's providence, a book of the New Testament writings fell into her hands, and as she read it the maiden began to be enlightened in soul. She rejoiced that she had found such a spiritual treasure, marveled at the great faith of the Christians in the One God, and grieved in her soul that until then she had been in the darkness of ignorance and error. Eagerly desiring to become more fully acquainted with the Christian faith and to partake of it, she, without delay, summoned a Christian maiden, the daughter of a noble dignitary, and, having received instruction from her, set out secretly at night, unknown to everyone, to the holy Bishop Cyril. Having sufficiently instructed the maiden in the Divine Scripture and signed her with the sign of the Cross, the bishop admitted her to the catechumenate[3] and entrusted her to a holy deacon named Agapius, so that under his guidance she might prepare herself for holy baptism by fasting and prayer. Domna performed all that was commanded her in secret, so that no one knew of it, except one of her eunuchs[4], a man of gentle disposition like herself, named Indis, who together with her had turned to the holy faith and was likewise preparing to receive baptism. When the time appointed by the bishop came to an end, Domna and Indis were baptized. Thus the maiden, who was no more than fourteen years old, soon after her first, fleshly birth was born a second time, a spiritual birth.

Returning to the palace, from that time on she occupied herself with nothing but prayer, fasting and the reading of Divine Scripture. Once, while reading the Acts of the Apostles, she came to the following passage: "For as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the price of what was sold and laid it at the Apostles' feet" (Acts 4:34–35).

3. Catechumenate (*oglasheniye*) was the name given to the preliminary examination of those preparing to receive holy baptism and to their instruction in the truths of the faith. It lasted from forty days to three years; sometimes, according to circumstances, it was shortened to a few days.
4. *Eunuch* properly means a castrated man. In antiquity it was customary for noble women to be attended by eunuchs, who held prominent positions at the imperial court.

The holy Domna resolved to do likewise. Gathering all her property, gold and silver, pearls and precious stones, costly garments and all her maidenly adornments, she secretly carried it all to her spiritual father, the holy Cyril. Laying everything at his feet, as though at the feet of the Apostles, she begged him to distribute the money received for all this with his own hands to those in need, which was done. Soon after this the holy Cyril fell asleep and went to God. Deeply keeping all his instructions in her heart, Domna strove day and night to please God, serving Him diligently together with her like-minded companion and spiritual brother, the eunuch Indis, with whom she had been reborn of water and the Spirit[5]. Being instructed in the law of the Lord, they fasted daily until evening; and their meal, taken late in the evening, consisted of stale bread and water; while the food appointed by the emperor and given to them daily satisfied the hungry, for they secretly distributed it all to the poor. Living such a God-pleasing life, they, like a city set on a hill (Mt. 5:14), could not remain hidden, although they took every care to conceal themselves. Their piety became manifest like a lamp brought out from under a bushel (Mt. 5:15), and like a treasure found in a field (Mt. 13:14). Thus it pleased God that this holy pair should become an example for the faithful and a reproach to the unfaithful.

The chief of the eunuchs, who managed the whole palace and had charge of the imperial table, learned of Domna and Indis's daily fasting. Instead of being astonished at such strictness of life, he resorted to torture and beat them for a long time, forcing them to confess what the food they were given was used for; but they concealed their virtue and would not admit it. Then a eunuch, a Persian by origin and by faith, approached and began to tell the chief of the eunuchs about their virtue, presenting it as though it were some kind of crime, and accompanying his account with slanders and insults. He spoke of the gentle and pure life of Domna and Indis, of their abstinence from food, and of how they distributed the food brought to them among the poor Christians, enemies of the emperor.

5. According to the Gospel expression. See Mt. 3:5.

"If you wish to learn the truth," he said in conclusion, "then open their storerooms, and you will see that my words are not false."

Then the chief of the eunuchs, who at the same time was the steward of the imperial palace, taking the keys, went to inspect their dwellings and storerooms; having opened them, he found nothing except the Precious Cross, a book of the New Testament, two reed mats lying on the ground, an earthen censer, a candle, and a small wooden vessel with the Most Pure Mysteries[6].

"But where is the gold?" he then asked them. "Where are the costly garments and the other precious things and adornments?"

Receiving no answer, he again subjected Domna and Indis to torture, but without success. Then he ordered them to be taken to another place and kept in confinement until he could speak of them to the emperor. When the holy maiden was being led out of her dwelling to confinement, she secretly took the book of the New Testament Writings and hid it in her clothing: the book was small and could easily be concealed; and Indis in the same way took a small vessel with the Divine Mysteries. The two of them were shut up and for a long time were starved and parched with thirst: this was the decision of their unrighteous tormentor, so that those who fed the hungry might themselves die a hungry death. From her long stay without food the young maiden fell into bodily illness; but He who cares for the birds and the beasts, who opens His hand and satisfies every living thing with favor (Ps. 144:16), God the Provider did not disregard His servants who had grown weak from long hunger: in one night He sent His Angels, who illumined them in the darkness with heavenly light, offered them a wondrous meal, heavenly food and an extraordinary drink, and departed. Domna and Indis were strengthened by partaking of what was offered them, and forgot the sufferings they had endured. Comforted by the appearance of the Angels and satisfied with Angelic food, they were radiant in countenance and, as though sitting in chambers of joy, sang: "As with marrow and fat my soul is satisfied, and my mouth praises Thee with joyful

6. Christians of the first centuries had the custom of receiving the holy Mysteries daily; but since it was not possible to celebrate the Liturgy every day, the holy Mysteries were given to the faithful to take home.

lips... O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee; my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (Ps. 62:6, 2).

Soon after this the chief of the eunuchs also came to see whether they had been overcome by hunger, for he thought in this way to force them to obey him. But seeing them joyful, bright of countenance and rejoicing in spirit, he exchanged his angry and cruel manner, which had been unable to achieve anything, for feigned gentleness; he ordered them to settle again in their former dwelling and abundantly supplied them with everything needful, food and clothing, gold and silver, and maidenly adornments, giving no less than he had done before. But the holy Domna again secretly distributed everything to the poor, not only the food but also the costly garments. Seeing the multitude of beggars flocking to her as to their nourisher, she took her girdle, adorned with precious stones and pearls, and all the rest of her adornments, and sent them to the deacon Alimpius with a request to sell it all and use the money received to feed the poor. Then, pondering by what means she might avoid living with sinners and remaining in the palace filled with idolatrous impiety, the holy Domna recalled the forefather David, who fled from the face of Saul and feigned madness before Achish, king of Gath (1 Kgdms. 21:13). Feigning madness likewise, she began to fall, to foam at the mouth, to tremble and to cry out. Learning of this, the chief of the eunuchs who managed the imperial palace was grieved, not knowing how to cure her. Hearing that Christians heal such illnesses, he summoned the Christian bishop, the holy Anthimus, and entrusted the maiden to him, so that he might heal her before the emperor's return from the war; and he appointed the eunuch Indis to attend her.

Perceiving in spirit Domna's intention, the bishop gladly received her and sent her to a convent of virgins. Domna rejoiced and was exceedingly glad that she had been delivered from living with the impious and had been granted to live among Christians.

Some time later, Maximian returned from war in triumph. Attributing his victory over his enemies not to the Most High God, mighty in battle, but to his lifeless idols, he wished to thank them with unseemly sacrifices, and at the same time to begin persecution of the Christians.

Having prepared a place in the midst of the city for a spectacle, he brought out from his palace golden and silver idols, set them upon royal thrones, and, crowning them with flowers, began to offer fat oxen to them in sacrifice. He commanded the priests to sprinkle the people standing round about with the blood of the sacrifice. And at once the Christians who were among the spectators began to leave the crowd, so as not to be defiled by being sprinkled with the blood offered to idols. Seeing this, the emperor began to speak loudly, addressing the people:

"Where are you going, O people, who prefer darkness to light and do not believe in the existence of these gods by whom the universe is upheld? Do you not see the present triumphs and victories? Do you not see how many blessings are added to former blessings, how everything is kept in peace, how new blessings arrive every day, and how we now possess things we did not possess before? Do you not see how our glory grows, how our realm expands, how some cities are conquered and others will be conquered by us? Do you not see how the kingdoms of other peoples are enslaved by us, and how everything is done according to our desire? By whose providence is all this accomplished, if not by the providence of those gods whom we serve? Let the favorable weather, the moderate rains, and the abundance of fruits bestowed by the gods convince you of this."

Thus spoke the lawless emperor, passing off a fable as truth, and he intended to say much more, but the Lord, of Whom "the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether" (Ps. 18:10), did not allow falsehood to boast any longer and exalt itself above the truth. Suddenly, in the midst of a clear day and under the shining of the midday sun, there sounded the crash of terrible thunder; the sky was darkened by dark clouds; a heavy rain poured down with a great wind and storm, with lightnings and hail. Thus was the wrath of God clearly revealed against the impious: some, frightened by the thunder, fell down as dead; others, rushing to flee, trampled one another, and many in the crowd lost their lives, trodden underfoot; the emperor himself, seized by fear and terror, fled in shame to his palace. Thus the spectacle was brought to an end, and the god-hating feast with its unclean sacrifices was disrupted. The rivers overflowed with water from the great rain

and drowned the fields, destroying all the labor of the farmers, since it was the time of harvest. Yet all this came to pass so that the impious might know the mighty hand of the One God who is in heaven. But the cruel-hearted emperor, blinded by malice, did not understand this: instead of recognizing the power of the true God, he fell into even greater madness, raising war against the One who is Terrible and who takes away the life of kings (Ps. 75:13).

Soon after this, not finding Domna and Indis among the priest-servants of his twelve chief false gods standing in the palace, the emperor asked where they were. He was told that Domna had lost her reason and was with people who knew how to cure this illness, and that Indis had been appointed to attend her, to watch over her and serve her. Maximian was greatly angered at the chief of the eunuchs, who had released them from service to the gods; he deprived him of his rank and punished him with the most shameful disgrace, appointing him to tend the camels at Claudiopolis[7]. Then, summoning Indis, the emperor restored him to his former duty: to serve the gods standing in the imperial palace. But Indis, without the emperor's knowledge, continued to serve only the One true God, in whom he believed. Meanwhile Maximian began openly to persecute the Church of Christ, destroying holy churches and building idol temples. He appointed as governors in all the provinces of the empire men of cruelty, obliged to torment the Christians without mercy. The emperor himself was the chief and foremost of the tormentors in cruelty; he slew and exterminated Christians and shed innocent blood like water. Sometimes he tried to deceive them with crafty words, so that afterward he might hand over to torments and death those who did not submit to his deceitful pretense. Seeking the most holy bishop Anthimus, who was hiding in a certain place, and not finding him, Maximian once entered a Christian church himself with a multitude of armed soldiers, like a wolf into a flock. Addressing the people, he tried, now by kindness, now by threats, to draw everyone to his error. At last he said:

7. Claudiopolis was one of the cities of the Asia Minor region of Cilicia.

"Renounce your vain faith; if you do not renounce it, punishment will not be slow to overtake you. You see this church in which you have gathered: soon I will burn it together with you."

The Christian presbyter, St. Glykerios, bravely stood against him and shamed the lawless one with fearless words:

"The gifts you promise," he said, "do not attract us, O emperor, and we do not fear your threats. We regard everything in the world as though it were a dream, and we would even count it a sorrow and a punishment from God if we did not suffer the most cruel torments for Christ. You boast of your victory over the barbarians, yet you are defeated even by Christian women and children, for the power of our Christ is clearly invincible. Who does not remember the recent thunder and lightning, the extraordinary thunder and rain? Many of you suddenly died, and the fruits of the earth perished from the unexpected flood. This was a clear sign of the wrath of God, provoked by your ascribing everything to your false gods and not to the true God. We do not fear your persecutions: the King of all has granted us from above weapons, with which we also arm and defend ourselves, as you now arm yourself with your armor-bearers. Standing against you, we firmly hope to win a wondrous victory, for when we are beaten we conquer, and when we fall we triumph."

Although the emperor was greatly angered in his heart at hearing these words, he nevertheless went out of the church without doing any harm to anyone. And the pious people in the church glorified the blessed Glykerios for such fearlessness. But being unable to restrain his fury for long, the emperor soon commanded that Glykerios be seized, brought before his unrighteous court, and, without any interrogation, subjected to cruel beating. They beat the martyr until his tormentors themselves grew weary. And while he was being beaten, the herald proclaimed:

"Speak less, Glykerios; be neither proud, nor rebellious, nor disorderly; honor the emperor and the Roman laws."

But the martyr, being stronger than his tormentors, cried out to his Heavenly King: "Lord Jesus Christ! As Thou didst strengthen me to

speak of Thee, so strengthen me to suffer for Thee, that through these sufferings I may become worthy of a greater reward."

As a fire blazes up, so at these words the fury of the tormentor Maximian blazed even more strongly. He himself was present at the torture so that the executioners would inflict ever harsher blows and wounds on the martyr's body, until the earth was soaked with his blood, the bones laid bare of flesh were visible, and all the martyr's limbs were broken; only his tongue still continued to speak freely:

"I am a Christian, a servant of Christ, the one true God; one is He, my Lord; one is He, my King!"

Unable to hear such words from Glykerios any longer, the tormentor ordered him burned outside the city. And he became a fragrant sacrifice to God and an acceptable whole burnt offering.

Soon the god-abominable pagan feast came round again. The sacrificial animals were led to the idol-shrine of the twelve chief gods standing in the palace. Looking at the priests walking in white garments, and not seeing Indis among them, the emperor asked where he was. Indis had clothed himself in sackcloth and shut himself in his chamber, lamenting and weeping over the perdition of the impious. This was reported to the emperor. Immediately summoning Indis, and seeing him in garments of mourning and weeping, the emperor understood what had happened and, without asking about his faith or his way of life, commanded that fetters be placed on his hands, feet, and neck, and that he be thrown into prison. Then he began again to ask about Domna, having forgotten what he had said before, and in anger, as if drunk, he repeatedly said:

"Where is Domna? Where is the priestess of Diana and Minerva?"

They answered him again that she had lost her wits, and that for this reason the chief of the eunuchs had expelled her from the palace. Then, remembering the chief of the eunuchs, the emperor commanded that he be beheaded, and that Domna be sought everywhere. This imperial command became known also in the monastery where Domna was staying. Seeing that it was impossible to conceal her, the abbess of the monastery, Agathia, cut her hair in the manner of men and clothed her in men's garments. Then, having fortified her with tearful prayer,

she let Domna out of her holy dwelling, so that the maiden might hide in the form of a man among men and not be recognized. Those seeking Domna could find her nowhere. This put the emperor into still greater wrath; he commanded that all the monasteries be laid waste and the virgins dishonored and defiled by violence. And at once throughout the whole city such calamities and devastations began to take place, as though he were held captive by barbarians. Those of the virgins who were stronger in body fled to the mountains and deserts, hiding in caves and earthen chasms, preferring to live among wild beasts and to be torn to pieces by them, rather than to dwell with lawless men and fall into the hands of vile people. Those virgins who had not succeeded in fleeing were seized: some were led off to judgment and torments, while others were given over to the public brothels for defilement. But the power of Christ strengthened them all and kept them unshamed and undefiled. Among them was one named Theophila, who especially stood out and shone among the virgins, as the moon among the stars, by her beauty and attractiveness, nobility and purity of life. When the shameless soldiers forcibly dragged her toward the brothel, she lifted her eyes and hands to heaven and cried out with tears:

"O my Jesus, my love, my light, my breath, the guardian of my virginity and of my life, look upon Thy bride! Regard me, my invisible Bridegroom, and hasten to my aid, lest the vow of my virginity, which I have pledged to Thee, be broken, for there is no longer time even for prayer! Do not deliver to the beasts the soul that confesses Thy name; let not the wolves tear Thy sheep. Preserve Thy bride, O my Bridegroom! Guard my virginity, O Fount of purity, that Thy name, which is glorified by the Angels, may be glorified."

Thus she prayed, and God was already preparing the fulfillment of her prayer. When they led her into the impure dwelling of women openly given to sin, one of the soldiers, full of unclean desire, entered to defile the undefiled bride of Christ; and behold, as soon as he drew near to her, he fell to the ground dead and lay at her feet, having breathed his last. The other soldiers meanwhile stood outside and awaited his coming out, angry that he tarried so long and wishing to enter themselves. At last one of them, inflamed with sinful desire, could not en-

dure it, and entered, and was struck with horror when he saw his friend dead. But when he also beheld the unapproachable light that shone around the holy maiden, he at once lost his sight, and, blinded, began to feel along the wall with his hands in order to find the way out, but could not. The same fate befell many others who shamelessly and with unclean desire entered to the maiden. This became known to those standing outside, and they all came together, not from lust, but to see what had happened; and they saw the maiden sitting modestly and reading a small book: it was the Gospel, which she kept by her; beside her stood a beautiful youth, shining with ineffable light, who gazed with lightning-like eyes. Seeing the youth, the impious at once fled in great terror; while the others cried out:

"Who is like unto the God of the Christians?"

When night had come, the radiant youth led the maiden out from there, brought her to the great church, and, setting her on the church porch, said:

"Peace be to thee."

Then he departed, leaving the holy maiden Theophila seized with fear and joy: with fear, because her protector had left her; with joy, because she had safely escaped the hands of the lawless. Coming to the doors of the church, she began to knock, that they might open to her, for the Christians gathered within to perform the all-night prayer to God had barred the doors out of fear of the impious pagans. One of the deacons asked from within who was knocking; hearing and recognizing the voice of Theophila, he announced it to the people present in the church. When the door was opened, all the people rushed to the holy maiden: both the nobility of her birth and the holiness of her life were known to all. O, with what joy and what tears did they all glorify God, when they learned how she had been saved from the violence of the impious and what mercy the Lord had shown her, keeping her virginity incorrupt by His strong hand! For she did not conceal the glorious wonders of God, which it is fitting not to conceal but to proclaim. The holy maiden, falling prostrate, moistened the church floor with tears of joy, and all offered common thanksgiving to the Lord Christ the Master.

At this time some of the most distinguished nobles and principal servants of the imperial court were accused before the emperor of adherence to the Christian faith. Among them was a certain Dorotheus, renowned for his military glory and civil merits, who bore the title of governor of Italy; with him were also Mardonius and Migdonius and other dignitaries, famous for their services, but still more famous for their faith and piety. When they were brought for interrogation, the emperor at first began to reproach them severely, and then commanded that they be beaten long and mercilessly, and, bound in fetters, be cast into prison. Not a day passed without Christians being seized, tormented, and delivered to various executions. But then the feast of the Nativity of Christ[8] came, and abundant sacrifice was to be offered to the Newborn. All the faithful gathered in the church. Then the impious servants of the impious Maximian came to him and said:

"O Emperor! Today is a great feast for the Christians; they invent a fable that it is the birthday of their God, and all have gathered in the church to celebrate this event. Therefore, see to it that the catch does not slip out of the net: command the soldiers to occupy the entrance to their church, and let an altar for our gods be set up before the church doors; let the heralds command them to come out of the church at once and immediately offer sacrifice to the gods. If they obey, you will deal with them as your imperial will pleases. But if you deign to follow our counsel, command that the soldiers surround the church on all sides, set it on fire, and destroy every single Christian who does not submit to you. Thus, having destroyed at one stroke the men who are dangerous and harmful to your realm, you will be free of care in the time to come."

They had not yet finished their speech when Maximian, interrupting them, cried out:

"I swear by the great gods that I myself have long planned to do this, and I do not know what has until now hindered me from carrying out what I had intended! Great thanks are due to you now, O gods, for it is you who have arranged that the same beneficial plan for our realm came to my servants' minds at the right time."

8. This was in the year 303 A.D.

And he at once commanded the chief of his bodyguards to go out with a multitude of soldiers, surround the Christian church with tow, wood shavings and other easily kindled things, and carefully guard all its exits with drawn weapons, so that not one Christian might escape their hands. When all this had been carried out, a herald sent by the emperor entered the church, and, standing in the midst, cried aloud:

"Men gathered here! Maximian, master of the universe, who has sent me to you, offers you a choice of two things: either, going out of the church, offer sacrifice to the gods at once, and you will remain alive (the altar for this has already been prepared before the doors); or, if you do not obey, you will all perish here together in an evil death, for the fire is already ready and the church is surrounded on all sides with brushwood. Therefore, choose quickly what you will." Having said this, he fell silent. Then the archdeacon standing at the sanctuary, whose heart was kindled with the fire of divine grace, said, turning to the people:

O beloved brethren, of one mind! Do you not know what the three youths did in Babylon,[9] whose unshakable courage in the true faith and whose steadfastness we marveled at beyond words when, a few days ago, we celebrated their memory, and as they themselves sang and called all created nature to praise the Lord of all, as though they were not in the midst of fire but walking among tender flowers! And we not only glorified them, but also desired to become sharers in their crowns. Let us then be made like those three youths, since the present time itself calls us to this. For the Emperor Maximian is like Nebuchadnezzar: although the two differ in name, they are very alike and in agreement in their cruelty and godlessness. Would it not be shameful for us, when those, being youths, and moreover only three in number, having as yet no example of a magnanimous exploit for the true faith, competed so gloriously, while we are far more numerous than they, indeed truly as it were countless; many of us are already advanced in years, and we have before us so many examples of courageous sufferings for Christ: would it not be shameful for us, being in such a number and of such an

9. That is, Ananias, Azarias and Misael (Dan. 3), whose memory is celebrated on 17 December.

age, to show ourselves attached to a short life, fearful and faint-hearted, and not to make use of the present time, which calls us to an exploit, as a great advantage, not to despise temporal life for the sake of God, who created us and gave His soul unto death for us, and not to give by our death a testimony of our firm and unshakable faith?! Truly, this would be an immeasurable disgrace. I say this on the assumption that no reward would follow our suffering. But the sufferings of this age are insignificant in comparison with the reward awaiting us beyond the grave: in place of this present, wretched and brief life, an eternal and painless life is appointed to us; for the contempt of a quickly fading glory, an imperishable glory; inalienable riches and a joy that never turns into sorrow. Shall we still desire this present life! Shall we not rather, making use of the favorable time, strive to reach that eternal life sooner, by dying for Christ? Look, brethren, upon the sanctuary of the Lord, and understand that our true Lord and God is today offered upon it in sacrifice for us. Shall we not also lay down our souls for Him on this holy place? And shall we not offer them to Him as a burnt offering, as a certain sacrifice?

Thus spoke the holy archdeacon, and all were kindled with desire to die for Christ, and with one voice they cried out:

– We are Christians, we are Christians, O Emperor, and we do not honor your false gods!

This was reported to Maximian, who then commanded that the church be burned with all the Christians within it. Meanwhile the faithful gathered in the church all the catechumens who were among them and divided them into four parts, so as to hasten to complete holy baptism over them. When baptism and chrismation had been accomplished, all were communed of the Holy Mysteries. While this was taking place, the soldiers, by order of the impious emperor, set fire to brushwood and tow around the church; its walls soon caught fire, and the great flame that surrounded it on all sides rose toward heaven, and penetrating within, swiftly consumed everything. The Christians being burned cried aloud to God, singing the song of the three youths and calling every creature to praise. And before they had finished their hymns, they gave up their holy souls into the hands of the Lord, as a sacrifice

acceptable to the immaculate Lamb slain for the world. The number of those burned reached twenty thousand. Thus the glorious host of holy martyrs passed from the Church militant to the Church triumphant, to celebrate an unending feast of rejoicing.

After five days had passed, the fire was still consuming the remains of the church, and smoke was rising; but from the burned bodies there came no stench at all, and the smoke was of an unusual, fragrant kind; a great fragrance issuing from the ruins spread through the air, and a golden radiance was visible, such as appears in the east at sunrise. Maximian, however, supposing that he had already destroyed and exterminated all the Christians who were in the city, occupied himself with games, horse races and various spectacles.

Near the place where the spectacles were held, there was in Nicomedia a great shrine of the pagan goddess Ceres.[10] Once, coming to her shrine with all his army and the people, Emperor Maximian offered sacrifices to the goddess. Then one of the soldiers, named Zeno, a commander by rank, moved by zeal for the true faith and unable to endure the sight of such impiety, stood on a high place and cried out, addressing the emperor:

– You are mistaken, O Emperor, in offering sacrifices to insensible stones and a mute tree. This is truly the deception of demons, leading their worshippers to perdition. Consider, O Maximian, and, raising to heaven your bodily eyes together with your spiritual ones, know the Creator from His visible creation. Through the creature, know what its Creator is, and learn to worship God piously, who is pleased not with the blood and sacrificial smoke of dumb animals, but with immaculate human souls and pure hearts!

Hearing this, Maximian ordered that Zeno's mouth be smashed with stones and his face and teeth broken, and then, barely alive, that he be led outside the city and put to death by the sword. Thus the holy martyr Zeno was crowned with the martyr's crown.

Meanwhile St. Dorotheus sat in chains together with Indes and the rest of the company. The blessed Bishop Anthimus visited them from

10. Ceres or Demeter was the Greco-Roman goddess of agriculture and fertility. The very widespread festivals in her honor were marked by immorality.

his place of refuge through frequent epistles, strengthened them, exhorted them to be firm in the faith, and roused them to exploit. Once the impious seized and brought before the emperor the deacon Theophilus, who was going to the martyrs with an epistle from Anthimus. Having read the bishop's epistle, the emperor fell into a rage, for it was written there not what pleased him, but what was useful to the saints. He immediately ordered Dorotheus and his company to be brought before him; looking at them angrily and reproaching them, he had them read Anthimus' epistles. They, seeing the deacon, rejoiced in soul and greeted him from afar with bright glances and joyful faces, and engraved in their hearts the words of the hierarch as they were read. Looking angrily at the deacon, the emperor said to him menacingly:

– Tell me, wretch, who gave you this letter, and where is he hiding?

The deacon first made a prayer to God in his heart, and then answered fearlessly:

– The epistles were given to me by a shepherd who, being now far from his flock, exhorts it and urges it to piety. Especially now, when he has learned of the invasion of wolves and other beasts, he loudly commands and announces to his sheep what they must do. The words he proclaims are not his own, but borrowed by him from the Supreme and First Shepherd of ours, who said: "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt. 10:28). Now I have told you who gave me this epistle, but where the one who sent it is, that I will not say: it would be sheer madness if I, having received so much good from my shepherd, were to become his betrayer; he will soon be revealed even without us, for a city set on a hill cannot be hidden (Mt. 5:14), as has been declared by the divine voice.

Unable to hear the deacon's bold speech any longer, the emperor ordered that his honorable tongue be cut out at once, and then that he be put to death outside the city with stones and arrows. Then by various tortures he put to death the rest of the holy martyrs: Dorotheus was beheaded, Mardonius was burned with fire, Migdonius was buried alive in a pit and covered with earth, while Gorgonius, Indes and Peter were thrown into the sea with millstones tied to their necks. Thus the

valiant martyrs of Christ completed their exploit and went to the Lord God by one path, though by different deaths.

Meanwhile St. Domna was hiding in a cave on a certain mountain, feeding on the plants that grew around the cave. Hearing of the death of the holy martyrs, she rejoiced in spirit that they had passed from the valley of this sorrowful life into the desired land of eternal joy. She especially rejoiced concerning Indes, her spiritual brother of one mind and co-participant in her spiritual birth through baptism. Preparing herself for the exploit and asking help from on high, she grieved for herself that of them all she alone had not yet gone to the Lord by the same path of martyrdom. Then she came down from the mountain and entered the city in the same men's garment in which her spiritual mother Agathia had clothed her. Not finding the blessed Agathia, whom she had come to seek, Domna understood that she had burned in the church together with many other maidens, and wept bitterly; she did not grieve over her death, but was sorrowful that she had not been granted to die with her for Christ. And standing at the place of the burned church, Domna wept and sobbed, moistening the ashes with her tears. When night came, she went to the seashore, where Indes and the other martyrs had been drowned. And there fishermen who stood there preparing nets for fishing, seeing the holy virgin and taking her, in her men's clothing, for a man, said to her:

– Come and help us, youth; if we catch anything, we will give you a share as well.

She gladly came to their aid. When they cast their nets for fishing and afterwards began to haul them up onto the shore, they felt such a weight in the net that they could scarcely drag it onto the land. The night was moonlit, and they saw a great quantity of fish, and in the midst of the catch the bodies of three martyrs: Gorgonius, Indes and Peter. The fishermen were struck with great terror, and quickly gathering the nets and the catch, but laying the bodies on the ground, they hastened to get into the boat so as to put out to the other shore. They called the seeming youth to come with them, but he did not wish to go with them. Then they gave him, for his labor, a portion of the fish they had caught and a little bread, and they set off from there. But Saint

Domna went up to the bodies of the martyrs and, recognizing each one, especially her beloved Indes, began to embrace and kiss them with inexpressible joy and to shed abundant warm tears over them. Rising, she saw on the sea a ship approaching the shore, moving only by oars with its sails lowered. Leaving the bodies of the holy martyrs, Domna drew near to the ship and, addressing the sailors, showed them her fish. Supposing that the fish were for sale and wishing to buy them, the captain of the ship asked the price, but Domna answered that he should take them for nothing. Then, in perplexity, he said:

"In the name of Christ, tell me truly, what do you sell the fish for?"

Hearing the name of Christ, Saint Domna understood that there were Christians on the ship, and she told them about the bodies of the holy martyrs, about all the tortures to which they had been subjected, and about their names. Then the captain of the ship at once brought out clean linens and spices with his friends, and, wrapping the bodies of the saints, carried them to the city wall, where, at the gate not far from the river, the holy Dorotheus had ended his life. There they reverently buried the bodies of the martyrs. Learning that Domna was of one faith with them, and taking her moreover for a youth, the captain of the ship began to beg her to go up onto the ship with him.

"Let us remain inseparably together until the end of our lives," he said.

But she, not agreeing, bade him continue on his way.

"I shall remain here," she said, "for the end of my life is already near, and I do not wish my body to be separated from the bodies of the saints with whom in life I was united in spirit and in faith."

Then the captain gave her a sufficient amount of gold, not for any bodily need, since she had no need of that, but for spices and incense for honoring the tombs of the saints, and he went on his way. And Saint Domna remained day and night beside the tombs of the martyrs, burning incense and anointing them with fragrance, and praying with tears.

But it was not possible for the work of light to remain hidden from those who walk in darkness, nor for the desire of Saint Domna for martyrdom to remain unfulfilled, for her holiness and piety betrayed her. It

was reported to the emperor that a certain youth was going around the Christian tombs and burning incense at them. The emperor laughed and said:

"It is fitting that he too should perish by the same death as they, so that he may learn by experience how vainly such honor is paid to men who after death are of no further account."

Having said this, he immediately sent orders to cut off her head. And the holy Domna was put to death by the sword while she was praying at the tombs of the holy martyrs. The impious burned her honorable body with fire. At the same time the holy martyr Euthymius was also slain by the sword after long tortures. Thus Nicomedia was adorned with its martyrs as with stars, adding to the number of the twenty thousand the wondrous Glycerius, the most blessed Zeno and Theophilus; to them were joined also Dorotheus with Mardonius and Migdonius, Indes with Gorgonius[11] and Peter, and the three holy virgins Agathia, Theophila and the beautiful Domna; and the completion of the whole host was Euthymius, to the glory of Christ, the true God, to Whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be honor and glory forever. Amen.

Troparion, Tone 2:

Passion-bearers of the Lord, blessed is the land that drank of your blood, and holy the dwellings that received your bodies; for in the contest ye overcame the foe and boldly preached Christ. Pray Him, as Good, to save our souls, we beseech you.

Kontakion, Tone 2:

Holy ones who by faith were steadfast in soul, having endured the fire of suffering, ye two myriads of sufferers cried out to Him who was born of the Virgin: Receive our whole-burnt offerings for Thee, as the gifts of the Persian kings, gold and myrrh and frankincense, O Eternal God.

11. The relics of the holy martyr Gorgonius were afterwards transferred to Rome.

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THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 29

29 декабря

New Calendar December 29 · Old Calendar January 11 (civil dates)

Commemoration of the Fourteen Thousand Infants Slain by Herod in Bethlehem

Память четырнадцати тысяч младенцев от Ирода в Вифлееме избиенных

Herod, seeing himself mocked by the Magi, was greatly enraged (Mt. 2:16). Against whom, then, was he enraged? On the one hand against the Magi, who had mocked him; on the other against the newborn King of the Jews. He was enraged at the Magi because they had not returned to him and had not reported the Infant; against Christ he was enraged out of fear lest He should take away his kingdom. For, not knowing that the kingdom of Christ is "not of this world" (Jn. 18:36), Herod supposed that Christ would possess an earthly kingdom. What, then, did the wretched Herod do, being unable either to take vengeance on the Magi, who had already departed, or to kill Christ, who could not be found? He poured out his wrath upon innocent infants. As a savage beast, when wounded, often does not look at him who wounded it, but rushes at whatever is before its eyes and in its fury tears it to pieces, as though it were the very author of its wound; so Herod, tormented by anger and finding no object of his rage, turned his fury upon infants who were in nothing guilty before him. He sent armed soldiers, as though to war, to "slay all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men" (Mt. 2:16). Herod remembered the time of the star's appearance indicated by the Magi, which, according to the interpretation of St. John Chrysostom and St. Theophylact, had appeared before the Nativity of Christ. But for how long before? If it appeared at the very

hour of the Annunciation, then nine months passed from the Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos to the Nativity of Christ. But the Magi came to Jerusalem on the very day of the Nativity and worshipped Christ in Bethlehem, and departed to their own country by another way; therefore Herod did not at once learn that he had been mocked by them, but at first supposed that they, not finding the sought-for Infant and ashamed of their error, had not dared to appear before him and had secretly returned home in shame. Then, forty days later, a glorious event took place in the Temple of Solomon: the elder Simeon and the prophetess Anna met here the Divine Infant, brought by the Mother of God on the day of purification [1], and bore witness of Christ and proclaimed Him openly to the people. The report of all that had happened in the Temple at the Presentation of the Lord spread throughout all Jerusalem and reached the king. Then Herod understood that this was indeed the Infant he sought, and that what the Magi had said of the newborn King, whom they had found in Bethlehem but had not returned to Herod, despising his authority, was true. The lawless Herod was exceedingly enraged. He at once began to seek the Infant by means of guile and secret devices, but could not, for Joseph had fled with Him into Egypt immediately after the vision that had come to him. Herod's efforts to find Christ continued for a year. After this, for some reason, he had to go to Rome to Caesar, and Herod was in great anxiety that he had still not found the sought-for Infant, for he feared that in his absence a new king might be found and become renowned among the people, and take the Jewish kingdom from him. Therefore he at once resolved in his mind to slay all the children of Bethlehem, so as to destroy the newborn King together with them. And this lawless slaughter of infants took place in the first year after the Nativity of Christ, on December 29; on this day the Church has appointed the commemoration of the slain infants. From the time of the star's appearance, one year and nine months had then passed. And the fact that Herod slew infants from two years old and under, he did out of fear and

1. According to the law of Moses, the mother of an infant (if the infant was male, after 40 days, and after 80 days if the infant was female) was to come to the temple to the priest and offer to God a one-year-old lamb or two doves. This rite was called purification. (Lev. 12:2–5)

for greater safety. Thus St. John Chrysostom says: "Do not wonder that Herod commanded the slaying of infants from two years old and under: rage and fear met in the tyrant; therefore Herod became very cautious, and from great fear condemned to death also the older age." In agreement with this, Euthymius also says [2]: "Herod supposed that the star did not appear to the Magi at once, but that the Infant had been born long before its appearance. For greater safety he therefore commanded that the time be advanced by two years."

The infants were slain in various ways: some were put to the sword, others were dashed against stones and walls, some were thrown to the ground and trampled underfoot, some were strangled with hands, torn and rent in pieces, pierced through, cut in two. The mothers wept bitterly: their great cry reached to heaven; they tore their hair and garments and tormented themselves, so that the words of the prophet Jeremiah were fulfilled: "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted, because they are not" (Jer. 31:15; Mt. 2:18).

Rama was the name of a city standing on a hill within the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. Some, however, called Bethlehem by the name Rachel, for Rachel, the wife of the patriarch Jacob and mother of Benjamin, was buried there. From her tomb Bethlehem received the name Rachel. Thus, when the infants were slain in Rachel, that is, in Bethlehem, the weeping, lamentation and great cry of the mothers mourning their slain children were heard in the city of Rama, which lay not very far from Bethlehem. This weeping is described in part by the two holy Johns, Chrysostom and Damascene. The first of them relates the following.

Seeing this, the mothers asked the murderers:

"Why do you kill our children? What wrong have they done to the king or to you?"

And there was no one who answered why this senseless slaughter was taking place, no one who comforted them in this great grief. They, with cries, called out to the soldiers:

2. Euthymius Zigabenus, Byzantine theologian of the 12th century; he wrote a history of heresies and commentaries on the four Gospels, the Psalms, and the Song of Songs.

"Spare us, spare us! Have you not mothers yourselves? Do you not know a mother's love? Have you no wives? Were you not loved by your mothers? Do you not fear that the same will befall your own children? Have pity on us! Do not deprive us of our children, but first slay us ourselves, for we cannot bear the death of our children! Pierce us! If our children have done you any evil, then let us die together with them!"

Thus they cried out in heartfelt anguish, and, distraught with sorrow, forgetting shame, they tore their garments, beat their breasts in grief, lacerated their faces, pulled out their hair, and called heaven to witness, crying out to God:

"O our Master, Lord! What means this great cruelty of the king? He rises against Thy creation: Thou didst create, and he slays; Thou gavest us children, and he takes them from us! Why did we bear boys into the light, if our infants must suffer so cruel a death?"

St. John Damascene describes this lamentation thus: The mothers, who had suffered in giving birth to their children, sat beside the corpses of the slain infants, with their hair loosed, lifting their hands to heaven; they tore their hair, sprinkled dust upon their hair, called heaven to witness, and, bathed in tears, spoke thus to Herod, who was absent, as though he were present:

"What means this command of yours, O king, directed against us? Are you not the father of your own children? Do you not know how great is the love of parents for their children? Did a star offend you? But why then do you not aim your arrows at the heavens, instead of drying up the milk in our breasts? Did the Magi do you wrong? But then why do you not wage war on Persia, instead of depriving the children of Bethlehem? If a new king has been born and you learned of him from books, then seize Gabriel and cast him into prison."

Soon after the slaying of the holy infants, whose number was fourteen thousand, the judgment of God overtook the murderer himself, King Herod. Cruel was the end of his life, as St. Theophylact relates: afflicted with fever and a disease of the bowels, swelling of the feet, obstruction of the nostrils, trembling of the whole body and the decay of all his members, the crafty king, eaten by worms, gave up his spirit in

terrible torments. It is also recounted that it was not enough for him to slay the infants of Bethlehem, but even at the very hour of his death he put to death many of the most distinguished and renowned citizens of Jerusalem: thus he executed Hyrcanus, the high priest of the Jews, as well as all those chief priests and scribes of the people whom he had earlier questioned, "Where should Christ be born?" and who had answered him, "In Bethlehem of Judea."

All of them he afterwards put to death by the sword. And this was a righteous judgment of God upon them, so that they all together with Herod died in cruel torments, as an Angel announced to Joseph in Egypt:

"They are dead which sought the young child's life."

Evidently it was not Herod alone who sought, but all his counselors, chief priests and scribes. Therefore not Herod alone died, but all who had sought the life of the Infant together with him. He was put to death by God Himself, while they were slain by Herod. Those with whom they were in sympathy, by them they received a cruel end. And that they all sought to kill Christ and were of one mind with Herod is evident from this: when the righteous elder Simeon the God-receiver, who had borne witness of Christ in the Temple and before all the people, died, they did not vouchsafe him a worthy burial, such as would befit so holy a man, a wise teacher, a far-seeing prophet, and an elder esteemed by all. They also put to death the holy prophet Zechariah because he had placed the Most Pure Virgin, who had entered the Temple with the Infant for purification, in the place of the maidens, where married women ought not to stand. Of this speak Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria and Andrew of Crete.

When the scribes and Pharisees saw this, they were indignant; but Zechariah stood against them, affirming that this Mother had remained a pure Virgin even after the birth. They did not believe him, and then the saint said that human nature, together with every creature, is subject to its Creator, and that it is within His all-powerful will to order His creation according to His own good pleasure, and to bring it about that a Virgin should give birth and remain a Virgin after the birth.

"For this reason," he said, "I admitted this Mother also to the place of the maidens, as a true Virgin."

The scribes were enraged in their hearts against Zechariah as a manifest transgressor of the Law, and, consumed with envy, they were angered both that the Mother of the Infant had been placed in the place of the maidens and that such testimonies were proclaimed concerning the Infant. They did not conceal their feelings before Herod, but made them known to him, and immediately began to seek the Infant, but did not find Him, for Joseph in the meantime had fled with Mary into Egypt. From then on the scribes became greatly wrathful against St. Zechariah, and together with him against the elder Symeon. Symeon soon died, and they did not vouchsafe him a worthy burial. Zechariah afterwards, at their request, was condemned to death by Herod. During the slaughter of the Bethlehem infants, St. Zechariah was killed between the temple and the altar, because he did not give up his son John to be slain. Thus the scribes and Pharisees avenged themselves upon him for his testimony concerning the Most Pure Virgin, and for having placed Her in the Temple in the place of the maidens. Soon they themselves also received the deserved punishment at the hand of their own king, Herod. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Apart from them, Herod also had seventy of the wisest men beheaded, whose assembly was called the Sanhedrin[3]. He left only one of them alive, but even him he ordered to be blinded. At that time there were in Jerusalem two wise, renowned and beloved teachers, Judas, called Avriphaeus, and Matthew Gargouloeus; these he ordered to be burned alive together with some of their friends. But even before this, Herod had savagely turned against his own household: he put to death his brother Pheroras, his sister Salome and her husband, who was of the tribe of David, his wife Mariamne, likewise of the tribe of David[4], his son Antipater, born of her, then two more sons, Aristobulus and Alexander, and many others he delivered to death without cause. Finally,

3. The Sanhedrin was the supreme Jewish tribunal, which also administered affairs of state; it consisted of 70–72 members and convened under the presidency of the high priest.

4. Herod knew the prophecies concerning the birth of the Messiah from the seed of David. Therefore he sought to destroy all the descendants of David living in his time, not sparing even his own relatives.

being already at the point of death, Herod bequeathed to the most trusted of his soldiers, with regard to the other illustrious Jewish men, of whom there still remained a considerable number held in chains, that when he breathed his last, the soldiers should immediately slay all these prisoners: that the Jews might not rejoice at his death, but rather be grieved to see so many of their men slain[5]. Thus he perished, an evil man by an evil death, having destroyed many together with himself. He dwelt in hell together with his fellow-minded ones. But the holy infants, slain for Christ, were established with the Angels in heaven, for "of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Lk. 18:16), concerning Christ, our Lord, to Whom be glory forever. Amen.

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Life of our Venerable Father Marcellus, Abbot of the "Monastery of the Sleepless"

Житие преподобного отца нашего Маркелла, игумена «обители неусыпающих»

The Venerable Marcellus was a native of the Syrian city of Apamea and came from a glorious and wealthy Christian family. Having lost his parents in his youth, he went to great Antioch to be instructed there in various sciences, which he soon mastered thoroughly; then he was kindled with the desire to acquire also inner, spiritual wisdom. For this purpose Marcellus resolved to set out for Ephesus, where, as he had heard, there were many men perfected in virtue. Leaving Antioch, he first of all distributed to the poor the whole rich paternal inheritance which he possessed in Apamea, and thus, having despised all worldly things, he soon reached Ephesus. Settling here with a certain pious man, he began to labour in virtue under the guidance of one Promotus, who had attained the highest spiritual perfection. And the blessed Marcellus received great spiritual benefit, beholding the virtuous lives of him and of the other holy men of Ephesus. As one who weaves for himself a crown of various flowers, he learned the various virtues, having before him various examples of a God-pleasing life. Living in voluntary poverty, he acquired by the labour of his hands

5. This command, happily, was not carried out.

what the body required. Being skilled in fine writing, he spent all the nights in prayer and the days in copying books; these books he sold at a just price, and a part of the money he used for his own needs, and the rest he distributed to the poor. Such was the beginning of his virtuous life. Then, hearing that in Byzantium there lived a certain Abba Alexander[6], wise and great in deed and word, able to bring many to salvation, Marcellus left Ephesus and hastened to him. At that time St. Alexander dwelt with his brethren at the church of St. Mina; afterwards he built a famous monastery on the seashore, in which he introduced a new rule, commanding that God be glorified day and night by unceasing psalmody: the brethren sang in the church, taking turns by hours. Coming to Byzantium, Marcellus became acquainted with a monk of this monastery, named James, who brought him to Abba Alexander. The Abba, foreseeing in him the grace of God, clothed him in the monastic habit, and prophesied concerning Marcellus and James that they would be vouchsafed many Divine gifts. Namely, speaking of them both, he said:

"Andrew was the first to follow Christ, but John overtook him."

He called James "Andrew" and Marcellus "John," for he saw that both burned alike with spirit toward God; and if James, like the Apostle Andrew, was the first to take upon himself the yoke of Christ, then Marcellus, like the Apostle John, surpassed him in many gifts. And Marcellus was truly like St. John, the virgin and Theologian, in his spotless virginity and God-inspired wisdom. Having labored for a sufficient time in this monastery, Marcellus acquired the gift of clairvoyance, and, foreseeing the speedy death of his teacher, Abba Alexander, and also that after the Abba's repose the honour of the abbacy would be offered to him, Marcellus secretly left the monastery: being still young, he did not wish to rule over the old and have subordinates under him, preferring to remain himself under obedience. He began to traverse the surrounding lands, visiting the fathers who lived in various forms of ascetic labour, and from each of them receiving a special benefit for himself. Meanwhile St. Alexander departed to the Lord. All the brethren

6. His memory is on 23 February. Abba, in the Hebrew language, means father; thus the instructors of monasticism were called in the East.

unanimously desired to have Marcellus in his place, and they grieved, not finding him anywhere. Failing to find Marcellus, they set over the monastery as superior a certain John, a man of advanced years and prudence. Learning of this election, the holy Marcellus immediately returned to his monastery, and all the brethren rejoiced at his return. Abba John loved him very much, for he was very useful to him, being as it were his right hand. After some time Abba John transferred the monastery to another, more secluded place, in Bithynia[7], opposite the city of Sosthenion[8], called Irinaeum, which means "peaceful," for this place, remote from the rumour and noise of the people, was truly a peaceful refuge for monks. In the transferred monastery its former rule, given by the Venerable Alexander and commanding the brethren to glorify God in the church by turns day and night, was unchangingly preserved; for the sake of this rule the monastery bore the name "Monastery of the Sleepless." The entire construction at the new place and the care of the monastery were entrusted to Marcellus, as a man faithful and skilled in every undertaking. To him soon fell the task of accepting the leadership of the monastery itself, which he foresaw with his far-seeing eyes, and which was also revealed by God to some of the brethren. The abbot of a nearby monastery, Macedonius (not the Macedonius who was a Pneumatomachian, but another: that one was among the rejected[9], while this one was among the venerable), a man of foresight, prophesied to the Venerable Marcellus that he would not only be a shepherd of the verbal flock, but that his very name would be glorified throughout the whole earth on account of his virtuous life and holiness.

"Many Hellenes and barbarians," he said, "taught by him, will abandon ancestral error and turn to God, and God will be glorified through him."

The Venerable Marcellus, however, was so humble that he did not disdain himself to tend the monastery's asses, and the brethren could

7. Bithynia is a region of Asia Minor lying on the shores of the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara, with its principal city Nicomedia.
8. Sosthenium is a small town situated in the vicinity of Constantinople.

scarcely prevail upon him, worthy as he was to become a shepherd of the verbal flock, to cease tending the dumb beasts.

Before long Abba John departed to the Lord, and the blessed Marcellus was appointed abbot of the Monastery of the Sleepless. And he was very merciful to the poor, daily feeding a multitude of the hungry. And God furthered his good service: as He once multiplied five loaves and two fishes to feed five thousand men (Mt. 14:18–21), so in the monastery of Marcellus the small quantity of food was invisibly and miraculously multiplied, so that it sufficed not only for the brethren, but also for the daily sustenance of a multitude of the poor and of wayfarers, as will be related further on.

The rational flock of Marcellus grew, and the brethren increased in number daily. For so great a number of spiritual men who had gathered to Marcellus on account of his virtues, a more spacious enclosure was needed, a larger church for prayer, great stores of food, and the other necessities of human life. Marcellus, however, had at that time expended everything upon the sustenance of the poor. But God, in Whom the Venerable Father had placed all his hope, did not forsake His servants, and provided for all that was needful in the following manner.

There was a certain man named Faretrius, who possessed great wealth. Having come to love the pious life, he came to the Venerable Marcellus, bringing with him his two sons, still small lads, and expressed the desire to become a monk. He bestowed upon the monastery all his riches, and was soon clothed in the monastic order together with both his sons. Upon the estate which he had given, there was first built a new church of stone, fair and spacious; then the whole monastic enclosure was rebuilt, and a multitude of new cells were erected, while the old cells were renewed. Besides this, a hospital was established, as well as a guesthouse, and everything necessary was completed. Food, clothing, and other needs were also procured for the monastery from the means given by Faretrius. Thus does God the Provider care for the faithful. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and

9. The heretic Macedonius did not acknowledge the Holy Spirit as God, but considered Him a creature, having no share in the Divinity or the glory of the Father and the Son. The heresy of Macedonius was condemned at the 2nd Ecumenical Council in 381.

all these things shall be added unto you" (Mt. 6:33). And the report of the Venerable Marcellus and of the unceasing praise of God established in his monastery spread everywhere; many emulated this rule and introduced it into their own monasteries, asking the Venerable Father for teachers. And as rivers flowed out from Eden[10], so from the monastery of Marcellus there went forth to all the monasteries situated in different lands and cities the rules and customs of the monastic life and of unceasing church chanting. In every monastery the hegumens were monks from the monastery of Marcellus, and everywhere the order of the monastery of the Sleepless ones was observed, for Marcellus was the chief, archimandrite, lawgiver, and governor of all the monasteries that were in that country. And many of the Greeks and barbarians were converted to the true God through the instruction of Marcellus, in accordance with the prophecy of the aforementioned far-seeing Macedonius. Thus the choirs of earthly Angels, who day and night glorified God, grew more and more in number.

It is fitting now to relate also the miracles of the Venerable Marcellus.

Certain three bishops were taken captive by the barbarians; having been freed from captivity, they were returning home, but since their path lay past the monastery of the Venerable Marcellus, they turned from the road and went in to him. He received and refreshed them with love, and when they gathered to set out on their return journey, he wished to give them something for the road, since they were very poor. Calling the steward named Julian, the Venerable Father asked how much money he had in the treasury.

"Ten silver coins[11]," the other answered.

Then Marcellus commanded that all the money be given to the three bishops, but the steward went and gave each of them only one silver coin, retaining the rest for the needs of the monastery. Perceiving this in spirit, the Saint summoned the steward and commanded him to be sure to give the bishops the remaining coins as well. Then the steward

10. That is, from the Paradise of the first people. From it flowed four rivers: Pishon, Gihon, Tigris and Euphrates (see Gen. 2:10–14).
11. One silver coin (silver denarius) equaled 22 kopecks.

gave them two more each, and, having thus expended nine, he nevertheless kept back the tenth; and this he did for the sake of the beggars who came daily to the monastery. After this, a certain pious man, moved by the Spirit, came to the Venerable Father and gave him for the needs of the monastery ninety talents[12] of gold. Then the Venerable Marcellus summoned the steward Julian and began to rebuke his stinginess with anger:

"Behold, God wished to send us through the hand of this pious man a hundred talents, but since you kept back one silver coin, disobeying my command, our common Provider, who desired to repay us a hundredfold, has deprived us of ten talents."

The steward, put to shame, fell at his feet, asking forgiveness.

The Venerable Father also possessed the grace of bestowing healings upon the sick: he healed by a single touch the monk Elpidius, who had a painful swelling in his mouth. He likewise cured by his touch the monk Stephen, who suffered from a severe stomach ailment, so that no treatment helped him and he had already despaired of his life; the Saint healed him by touching his belly and spine. When the aforementioned steward Julian fell ill and was already near death, the Venerable Father gave him a twofold remedy, spiritual and bodily: he first taught him not to transgress the commands of the hegumen and not to trust in temporal riches, but to rely upon God, who equally cares for all; and thus, having set his soul aright, he healed him also of his bodily illness.

It is fitting to relate also a yet more wondrous event. A certain Jew suffered from an incurable disease: he had foul sores upon his body. When the whole art of the physicians proved fruitless and the sick man despaired of a cure, he then had recourse to the Venerable Marcellus, that swift and disinterested healer, as to his last hope. The Venerable Father asked the Jew about his faith, and when he learned of his impiety, he said that it was impossible for him to receive healing unless he first renounced his impiety and accepted the Christian faith. The Jew promised that he would immediately turn to Christ as soon as he received healing. Yielding to his entreaty, the elder healed the sick man

12. A talent equaled approximately 1500 rubles.

by his prayer, and the one healed at once embraced the Christian faith. But not yet four days had passed before the Jew returned again to his impiety. His former disease also returned to him: as healing had followed upon faith, so did the former disease follow upon his apostasy. Compelled, though against his will, to have recourse to the Saint once more, he again renounced his impiety, joined himself to piety, and besought the gentle Father for mercy. Having received healing a second time, after a few days he again went, like "a sow that goes to wallow in the mire" (2 Pet. 2:22), and once more there befell him a yet more grievous disease.

What did the impious man do? He again shamelessly had recourse to the Saint. And so it was repeated several times. At last the Venerable Father said to him:

"Know, man, that you are deceiving not me but Christ, for it is not I who heal you but Christ, and you cannot hide from His all-seeing eye the impiety of your heart, honoring Him with your lips while your heart is far from Him (Mt. 15:8), professing piety in words while in deed turning back to your former unbelief. Without any guile, turn to Christ with your whole heart, and you will be immediately healed, not only in body but also in soul."

But the impious and senseless Jew answered the Saint:

"Whatever I may have to endure, I will never abandon the faith of my fathers."

Hearing these words, the Venerable Father silently departed from him, and the Jew, having gone a little way from the monastery, suddenly fell down and died, both in body and in soul. Learning of this, the holy father wept, and said: "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God" (Deut. 6:16).

But let us continue our narrative of the healings of the faithful. A certain man named Cyrus, who afterwards became great in the monastic life and was of much benefit and strengthening to many, before taking the monastic habit possessed great bodily strength and skill in wrestling. Unexpectedly, by the permission of God, the devil struck him from head to foot with a purulent disease, as once Job, so that not only his skin but also his flesh and sinews rotted upon him, so that only his

bare bones were visible. How great were this man's sufferings cannot even be described. Neither could he be healed by any human remedies, but only by divine ones, of which the giver was St. Marcellus. When the sick man fell at his feet, begging for healing with tears, the Blessed One at once raised his hands to heaven and, according to his custom, offered fervent prayer for the sufferer. Then, touching his sores with his hand, he said:

"O good man! It is not fitting that these sufferings should overcome you, nor does it befit one who struggles against invisible enemies to be concerned about the body. Trust, and if you choose the Most High as your refuge (Ps. 90:9), this sore shall depart from the chamber of your body."

Thus spoke the Saint, and the disease immediately left that man. The sores began to be covered with flesh, visibly to all, just as this is described in the prophecy of Ezekiel (Ezek. 38:8); the sinews were restored, the joints were strengthened and covered with skin, and Cyrus, beyond all expectation, quickly recovered. And the servant of God, by the grace given him from God, bestowed wondrous healings not only upon those whom he touched with his hands, but even upon those who were far from him.

The wife of a certain deacon named Eugene came to the time of childbirth, but she could not give birth, and neither physicians nor midwives could help her. Everyone had already despaired of her life, and she lay without consciousness. Then her husband, the deacon Eugene, fell at the feet of the Venerable Father and began with tears to beseech him for help. The Venerable Father prayed, and, blessing bread, gave it to the deacon, that he might quickly place it upon the breast of the sick woman. And as soon as this was done, the wife gave birth to an infant and was freed from her suffering.

Coming to herself, she began to ask:

"Where is the monk who relieved my sufferings? Where is he who delivered me from death?"

To the question of who that monk was of whom she spoke, and what he looked like, the woman described the outward appearance of the monk who had appeared to her, and everyone recognized that it was the

Venerable Marcellus, who had appeared to her and delivered her from death.

This blessed father attained such perfection in the monastic life that, for the sake of his purity and holiness, the Angels dwelt with him as companions. The abbot of a monastery situated on the river Euphrates[13], Sergius, having heard much about the Venerable Father, came to see him, and saw far more than he had been told about Marcellus. Once they were standing together at prayer, and Sergius saw that when the Venerable Marcellus bent his knees, two bright Angels supported him on either side and lifted him from the ground; and his face, during his prayer, became bright as lightning. Seeing this, Sergius trembled with fear, and his soul nearly left his body from terror.

God also granted revelations about His servant Marcellus to other great fathers. Elisha, abbot of the monastery of Dese, desired to see the saint and to learn of his life; when he prayed to God about this, the Lord showed him Marcellus in a vision, as he was in his outward appearance, and revealed to him the height of his virtues. Elisha afterwards related this to Peter, the disciple of St. Marcellus, who happened to be with him.

It was revealed to Gavdiolus, abbot of a monastery situated in the city of Pompeiopolis, on the Euxine Sea[14], that God had granted Marcellus a grace equal to that of the lawgiver Moses. Gavdiolus bore witness to this before Evlassius, a disciple of Marcellus. Truly the Venerable Father possessed the gift of prophecy, for whatever he foretold to anyone always came to pass. Once a certain bishop, a very covetous man, came to him. The blessed one asked him for a loan of two gold coins[15] to distribute to the poor, but the bishop refused him and did not give it, saying that he had none himself. Then the Venerable Father said to him prophetically:

13. A large river flowing into the Persian Gulf; its sources are in the mountains of Armenia.
14. Now the Black Sea. Formerly it was called the Axinian, that is, "Inhospitable," on account of its storms; but when its shores were gradually settled by the Greeks, they named it the Euxine, that is, "Hospitable."
15. A zlatnik (gold denarius) equals 25 silver coins, that is, about 5 rubles 60 kopecks.

"Soon you will not even have your own body, which will be received by the grave; and your gold will go to the brotherhood of the monastery."

So it came to pass. Not two days had passed before the bishop died, and his property was given to the Venerable Father's monastery, as he had prophesied. The Venerable Father foresaw distant things as though they were near. Once his disciples were sailing across the Euxine Sea in ships on some monastery business. A great storm arose, the sea grew rough, and they were already despairing of their lives; at that time the Venerable Father appeared to them and saved them, bringing them safely to harbor. When they were in the city of Ancyra[16], one of them, named Paul, fell seriously ill, and the monks who were with him already thought of leaving him there. Then the sick man, sighing from the depths of his heart, cried out with tears:

"Father Marcellus, where are your prayers? You committed me to God, and here I am perishing; and what is most grievous, I am perishing outside your flock and far from my brethren!"

Thus the sick man spoke with tears in the city of Ancyra, and the Venerable Father in the monastery heard his weeping and lamentation, and said to his disciple Caesarius that one of the brethren sent on service was in sorrow and sickness. Rising, he prayed for him, and Paul at once recovered. Caesarius noted the time, and when the brethren returned, it was found that Paul had recovered in Ancyra at the very hour when the holy father, foreseeing his illness, had prayed for him.

Once God punished the land with a great famine. The keeper of the monastery granary, named Malchus, came to the Venerable Father and reported that the grain was already running out and there was barely enough bread for ten days.

"Go," the saint replied to him, "and perform your obedience, taking no thought about anything."

Supposing that the abba hoped that bread would be brought in abundance from somewhere far away, Malchus, as was his custom, continued to distribute bread from the granary not only for the needs of

16. Ancyra, now Ankara, an ancient city of the Asia Minor province of Galatia.

the brethren but also to the poor. Five days passed, very little bread was left in the granary, and Malchus came again to the abba to report the shortage of grain. But the abba again, as the first time, sent him back to his work, bidding him take no thought about this. Two days later nothing more remained in the granary, and Malchus returned to the abba in confusion. The Venerable Father rose, went to the granary, and bade Malchus open it.

Malchus, however, swore that not even one grain remained and there was no need to open it; nevertheless, he opened it. And behold, he saw the granary full of every kind of grain, and was filled with terror; the Venerable Father, however, rebuked him for his unbelief. From that time the granary did not diminish until the famine had passed: as much as the keeper used in one day, so much was it found refilled on the following day. In this way the Venerable Father fed during the famine not only the brethren but also a great multitude of beggars and the needy, wayfarers and strangers. Wonderful are all these works of the Lord, accomplished by His servant Marcellus; but still more marvelous events follow.

A certain Paul, not the one mentioned above but another, a monk of a different monastery, suffering from a grievous illness, sent to the saint with a plea that he come to him. When the messenger reached the monastery of Marcellus, he found him conversing about the dogmas of the Church with the Bishop of Chalcedon[17], and the saint could not go to the sick man before he had finished his discourse with the bishop on matters of the Church. Meanwhile the sick man died, and when the Venerable Father arrived, all the rites over the deceased had already been performed and he was being carried out for burial. Possessed of great faith, the holy father raised his bodily and spiritual eyes to heaven, fervently prayed to God in the secret chamber of his heart, as was his custom, and laid his hand upon the dead man. Some of those present mentally mocked, saying:

"What is this old man doing, not believing in the death of the brother lying here, and testing him with his hand?"

17. Chalcedon is a city of Asia Minor on the shore of the Sea of Marmara, renowned as the place of the 4th Ecumenical Council.

While they were thinking this, and the saint was touching the deceased with his hand, the latter suddenly came to life, rose, sat up on the bier, and began to speak. All were seized with terror and trembling at this awesome miracle; the Venerable Father, however, forbade those present to speak of it; but the greatness of God and His so exalted gifts in the Venerable Father could not be concealed.

It is fitting to speak also of the power and authority which the Venerable Marcellus had over demons. Like dust driven by a great wind, demons were cast out of people by his prayers. Once four demoniacs, cruelly tormented by demons, were brought to him, and they cried out to the saint:

"Command us to go out, for you have power over us!"

But the saint was silent and did not even look at them, but only prayed inwardly to God:

"Lord, have mercy on Thy creature!"

He knew well the cunning of the demons, who wished to draw him into pride by their crafty words. And while the saint remained silent, the demons went out, vanquished by his humility.

But who will be able to recount in detail the miracles of our Venerable Father? Who can measure the grace of God that rested upon him? Who can express in words his great faith, by which he could perform such deeds? There would not be time to tell of everything. Here is one of his countless miracles, sufficient for our benefit and for the glorifying of God, who is wondrous in His saints. Once in Byzantium a great fire broke out, and the whole city was engulfed in flames, chastised by God for the sins of its inhabitants. There was no possibility of quenching the unconquerable force of the fire, which devoured everything with a strong whirlwind and turned all to ash. There was no longer any hope that a single house would survive the fire, for the whole city was surrounded by flames. Learning of this, the Venerable Marcellus stood in prayer, raising his hands to heaven and shedding tears from his eyes. And at once the fire stopped and went no further, and half the city was saved, for the whole fiery force was suddenly quenched, as though by a great rain, by the drops of the Venerable Father's tears.

After that the following also happened. A certain nobleman, named Ardaburius, son of Aspar, cruel in disposition and an Arian in faith, became angry with one of his subordinates, named John, and wished to kill him. Having no place to hide, John fled to the monastery of the Venerable Marcellus. Ardaburius learned of this and sent slaves to take him from there, but the Venerable Father did not surrender him. The nobleman sent slaves again to Marcellus with a request, and at the same time a threat, to give up John at once, but the Venerable Father sent these away empty-handed too. Then the enraged Ardaburius sent armed soldiers to forcibly drag John out of the monastery and to kill with the sword those who would resist. And so, when the soldiers with drawn weapons surrounded the monastery and intended to seize the enclosure, the brethren came to the saint and with tears begged him to give John over to the soldiers, lest they too perish innocently on his account. But the Venerable Father did not heed the brethren (for he was very merciful and did not wish to deliver an innocent man to death), and had recourse to a spiritual weapon, the power of the Precious Cross; armed with it, he himself went out to meet the soldiers. And at once great fear fell upon all the soldiers: they saw the Cross shining like the sun, and around it a great flame, lightnings and thunders. Throwing down their weapons, they fled in terror to the one who had sent them. Hearing of this, Ardaburius himself was seized with terror, and, restraining his anger, forgave John.

Since Ardavurius and his father Aspar have been mentioned here, it will not be amiss to relate also their end, which was revealed to the Venerable Father. Aspar, who was of the Gothic[18] race, was first after the emperor in rank and power, and commanded all the Greek army. He had two sons: the elder, Ardavurius, and the younger, Patricius. In many ways he strove against the emperor, and together with his entire household secretly plotted against the imperial house; Aspar did great harm to the Church of Christ by aiding the Arians. The pious and Christ-loving Emperor Leo,[19] who was called the Great, was meek and

18. The Gotfy or Goths: a Germanic tribe, originally living to the southeast of the Baltic Sea. Afterward they divided into Eastern and Western Goths and settled over nearly all of Europe. The Goths accepted the Christian faith, but in a distorted form, from the Arians.

God-fearing, and for a time endured this, partly through his guilelessness and partly because all the strength of the Greek army, among whom there were then many Arians, was devoted to the house of Aspar and obeyed him. Yet this impious house was soon to perish. The Venerable Marcellus had the following vision concerning him in a dream: a lion was wrestling with a serpent which, being of enormous size, struck him with its tail and overcame him. The lion, being vanquished, grieved and circled the serpent in vain, unable to do it any harm. Then both—the lion and the serpent—lay down to rest, wearied from the struggle. After a little while the lion rested and, gathering strength, suddenly rushed upon the serpent in great fury, as though awakening from sleep, and overcame it, striking it to the ground. Having seen this in a vision, Abba Marcellus foretold that Aspar would perish at the hand of the emperor, together with his entire household, for the lion he had seen prefigured Emperor Leo, while the great serpent signified Aspar, who was indeed a serpent, wounding Orthodoxy and harming it with his impious Arianism. Before long the vision and the saint's prophecy came to pass. The pious Emperor Leo desired by his mercy and kindness to reconcile Aspar and his sons to himself, to make them his friends instead of his enemies, and also strove to bring them to piety. Therefore he betrothed his daughter Ariadne to Aspar's younger son Patricius, whom he wished to leave as emperor after himself, since he had no son and intended to raise his son-in-law to the throne. But then murmuring arose among the pious people: all feared that the Church of Christ would be utterly brought low by the plots and malice of the Arians, for the emperor's son-in-law was an Arian. All the Orthodox gathered together with the bishops and priests, and taking with them the holy elder Marcellus, went to the emperor at the hippodrome[20] and told him not to raise a heretic to the imperial throne, but that the emperor's son-in-law should either renounce the Arian heresy or, if he wished to remain in it, not accept the imperial dignity.

To quiet the people, Emperor Leo promised in every way to bring his son-in-law to Orthodoxy. And although his son-in-law joined the

19. He reigned from 457 to 474.

true faith, even if through guile, the people's murmuring did not cease. At this time the machinations and malice of Aspar were exposed: it became clear that he not only aspired to the imperial crown, but together with his sons sought the emperor's head and intended to kill him. Then all the people rose up against the house of Aspar, unable to endure its treachery, and sought by every means to destroy it. But Aspar, in fear, fled with his sons to Chalcedon and shut himself up in the church of the Martyr Euphemia, while many soldiers stood around the church and guarded his safety. But after the emperor's conciliatory words, he came out and returned to Constantinople. Soon thereafter Aspar himself and his son Ardavurius were killed by Zeno at the emperor's command; the emperor's son-in-law Patricius was exiled, and the princess Ariadne, who had been betrothed to him, was given in marriage to Zeno, who later, after the death of Emperor Leo, received the Greek empire as well.[21] Thus the impious house of Aspar perished, overcome by Leo—in accordance with the saint's prophecy.

But let us return once more to the Venerable Marcellus. When the people, together with the hierarchs and presbyters, and also the Venerable Marcellus, were going to Emperor Leo at the hippodrome, many of the faithful were deemed worthy to see how an Angel of God, in the likeness of a handsome youth clothed in white and girded with a golden belt, accompanied the Venerable Marcellus and supported him by the arm. They saw this throughout the time he went with the people and as he returned, even to the doors of his dwelling. When the Angel had brought him to the doors, he became invisible. From this it is evident how beloved of God was our blessed Father Marcellus, for He sent His Angels to minister to Marcellus, to guide and guard him on his way. And the words of Scripture were fulfilled in him: "He shall give His angels charge concerning thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Ps. 90:11).

Having lived for sixty years in the monastic struggle, the Venerable Marcellus at last drew near to his blessed end. He was like the prophets in discernment, like the patriarchs in faith and unwavering hope in God,

20. The hippodrome was the place where horse races were held; it also served for all large gatherings.
21. Zeno reigned from 474 to 476.

and like the martyrs in the daily mortification of the body. In beholding God he was like the Prophet Moses, whom he equaled in grace; in meekness, David; in zeal for the faith, the Apostle Peter; in virginity and theology, John; and in the grace of healings, all the Apostles, for he was a fountain of healings and a river of wondrous benefactions to all. When the Venerable Father lay upon his sickbed, a multitude of monks surrounded him with tears. Among them was one named Lucian, of noble birth, who had renounced all things worldly, entered upon the monastic life, and advanced further than the others in virtuous living. Weeping more than the rest, he begged the saint not to leave him without his guidance, like a ship without a helmsman, to suffer amid the sea of this life and the waves of temptations, but to take him with him. Looking upon him, the Venerable Father said:

"Take courage, child, for soon after my departure you too shall follow after me."

Hegumens and brethren from the neighboring monasteries gathered, while hierarchs and nobles came from the imperial city to visit the ailing man and give him their last kiss. The Venerable Father gave each one fitting instruction and spoke much with them concerning the profit of the soul and eternal life. Then he bade them withdraw from him for a time, as though thereby showing that he wished to sleep a little. When all had withdrawn, he fell asleep in a blessed and everlasting repose, committing his holy soul into the hands of God.[22] He was buried in the church which he himself had built. Blessed Lucian wept continually at his tomb, and behold, on the fifth day the Venerable Father appeared to him in a vision and said:

"Why do you grieve? Do you not believe that I have entreated God for you, and that you shall be with me at once?"

On the third day after this vision, Lucian reposed in the Lord, surviving his father and guide by eight days. Thus, even after his repose, the Venerable Marcellus fulfilled his prophecy, soon taking to himself, as he had promised, his beloved disciple Lucian; and he stood with the saints, whose equal he had become through his virtuous life, before his

22. The Venerable Marcellus reposed about 486.

Most Holy Master, the Lord of all the saints, in eternal joy and gladness. May we too be deemed worthy of these through his prayers and by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

* * *

Life of the Venerable Mark the Cave-Dweller and Theophilus the Weeper

Житие преподобных Марка Пещерника и Феофила Плачливого

The time in which blessed Mark struggled is best attested by the fact that, during his lifetime, the venerable relics of our Venerable Father Theodosius were translated from the cave to the holy great church. After receiving the holy Angelic habit, blessed Mark settled in a cave and lived there, occupying himself in digging many chambers with his own hands, not only for the exercise of prayer,[23] but also for the burial of the departed brethren; and he carried out the excavated earth upon his shoulders. Thus he labored unceasingly in this God-pleasing work, awaiting his great reward in heaven, but unwilling to receive it on earth; for whenever anyone compelled him to accept some object for his labor, he immediately gave what he had received to the poor. Moreover, the blessed man girded himself with an iron belt, which he wore throughout his life, spending day and night in prayer. Along with unceasing prayer, blessed Mark joined strict fasting, for the Lord Himself united fasting with prayer;[24] therefore the Venerable Father drank water sparingly, measuring it by this righteous measure from a copper cross that was hollow within. Thus he utterly vanquished the age-old enemy of mankind, "who lusteth against the spirit,"[25] and mortified his flesh, not only through confinement, but also through labor and bonds, abstinence from sleep and hunger; not only

23. The monks of the Kiev Caves Monastery had the custom of withdrawing into the caves for solitary prayer. For this they dug recesses in the walls of the caves, which can be seen even to this day in the caves.

24. As can be seen from the words of the Lord Jesus Christ about casting out demons: "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Mt. 17:21).

25. That is, always desiring what is contrary to the Spirit (Gal. 5:17).

through silence in a dark cave, but also through digging the earth, girding himself with iron, vigils, and fasting. Dwelling in the Angelic habit, the saint showed himself in deed to be as one without a body, so that he feared not death; rather, death feared his voice as it would an Archangel's trumpet. For our Venerable Father Mark received from the Lord such power to work miracles that even the dead obeyed his command, as was attested by many miracles. Once, when digging a grave as was his custom, he grew exhausted after long labor and left it narrow and insufficiently wide. It so happened that a monk who had been ill died, and there was no other place to bury him except the one Mark had dug. The dead man was brought to the cave, and they could scarcely lay him in the narrow grave. Then the brethren began to murmur against Mark, saying that because the grave was so narrow they could neither lay the departed as was fitting nor pour oil upon him. But the Cave-Dweller bowed humbly to them and said:

"Forgive me, fathers; because of my weakness, I did not finish the grave."

But they continued to reproach and rebuke him even more. Then the Blessed One said to the dead man:

"Brother, since the place is cramped, move yourself over, and taking the oil, pour it upon yourself."

At once the dead man stretched out his hand, raised himself a little, took the oil, poured it crosswise upon his face and breast, returned the vessel again, and then, before everyone's eyes, lay down, arranged himself, and fell asleep.

At the sight of such a remarkable miracle, a great fear and trembling seized everyone.

On another occasion it happened that one brother died after a long illness. One of his friends wiped him with a sponge according to custom, and then went to the cave, wishing to see the place where the body of his beloved friend would be laid, and asked about this of the Blessed Mark, the Cave-Dweller.

The Blessed One answered him:

"Go, tell the brother to wait until the next morning, while I dig a grave for him, and then he will depart into the rest of eternal life."

"Father," the brother answered the Cave-Dweller, "I have already wiped his dead body with the sponge; to whom then do you bid me say this?"

"You see that the place is not yet ready," Mark said to him again, "and I tell you: go, say to the deceased: thus says to you the sinful Mark: Brother, remain here yet this day, until I prepare a grave for you, and then I will announce it to you, and tomorrow you will go to Christ, whom you desire."

The brother obeyed, and on coming to the monastery he found the whole brotherhood performing the usual chanting over the deceased. Then he said to the dead man:

"Brother! Mark says that the grave is not yet ready for you; wait therefore here until tomorrow."

No sooner had he spoken these words, to the astonishment of all, than the dead man immediately opened his eyes, and his soul returned to him. He remained alive that day and the following night, speaking no word to anyone, but only gazing with open eyes. In the morning the same brother went again to the cave to learn whether the place had been prepared. St. Mark said to him:

"Go, say to the one who has come back to life: Mark says to you: leave this temporal life and pass into the eternal; give up your spirit to God, and let your body be laid here in the cave with the holy fathers. For behold, the grave is already prepared for you."

The brother returned and reported all this to the one who had come back to life; he at once closed his eyes, committed his spirit into the hands of God, and was laid with honor in the cave, in the prepared grave. And all marveled at this most glorious miracle: how the dead man came to life at the word of the Blessed One and died again at his word; and they zealously glorified God.

On another occasion the following happened. There were in the same Kiev Caves Monastery two brothers, John and Theophilus, who had the most heartfelt love for one another; from the days of their youth they were of one mind in everything and served God with equal zeal. They besought the Blessed Mark to dig a common grave for their burial, for when the Lord should command them to die. After a long

time, the elder brother Theophilus went away somewhere on the monastery's business, while the younger, John, pleasing to God, fell ill, died, and was laid in the cave in the prepared place. A few days later Theophilus returned, and learning of his brother's death, he grieved greatly. Taking with him some of the brethren, he went to the cave, wishing to see in what place the departed had been laid. Seeing that he had been placed in their common grave in the upper place, Theophilus became indignant and began to complain greatly against Mark, saying:

"Why have you laid my brother in my place? For I am older than he!"

But the humble Cave-Dweller bowed to him and said:

"Forgive me, brother, I have sinned."

Then, turning to the dead man, he said:

"Brother, rise and yield this place to your elder brother, and lie yourself in the lower one."

And at once, at the word of the Blessed One, the dead man rose and lay down in the lower place. All who had come with Theophilus saw this miracle and were seized with great fear and terror. The brother who had complained against the Blessed Mark fell at his feet, asking forgiveness: "I have sinned, Father, in causing my brother to move from his place," he said, "I beg you, bid him lie again in his former place."

But the Blessed One answered him:

"The Lord Himself has so arranged it that the body of this dead man shows what love he preserved for you even after death, submitting to your seniority and withdrawing from the upper part of the common grave prepared for you both. The Lord has so ordered it in order to end the enmity that arose between us because of your complaint, and so that you should not have malice and enmity toward me. But to raise the dead is the work of God; and I am a sinful man, and therefore I cannot say to this dead man: arise and lie again in the upper place. You bid him yourself: will he not obey you? Know also this: it was necessary for you not to leave the cave any more, so that you might immediately inherit your seniority and be laid here at once. But since you are not yet ready for departure, go, take care for the salvation of your soul, and in a few days you will be brought here."

Hearing this, Theophilus began to grieve greatly, thinking that he would fall and die on the spot, and he did not even expect to reach the monastery. With difficulty recovering himself, he returned to his cell and gave himself up to inconsolable weeping. He distributed all his belongings, keeping for himself only a shirt and a mantle. Every day he awaited the hour of death, and no one could restrain him from bitter weeping; and those who wished to comfort him only plunged him into still greater sobbing. And they could never force him to taste any tasty food; his tears were his bread day and night (Ps. 41:4). When the day came, he washed his face with tears and said:

"I do not know whether I shall live to evening."

When night came, he again clouded the light of his eyes with tears, saying:

"Who knows whether I shall live to morning! Many, rising in the morning from sleep, did not reach evening, or another sleep, except death; and many, having fallen asleep, did not rise from their bed. How then can I hope to remain alive, I who have received notice that I am soon to die?"

And unceasingly weeping and fasting, he prayed that the Lord, in His immeasurable bounty, would grant him time for repentance. Acting thus for many years, he so wasted his flesh that his bones could be counted, and from many tears he lost his sight.

Our Venerable Father Mark, foreseeing the hour of his departure to the Lord, called Theophilus and said to him:

"Forgive me, brother, that I have caused you such grievous sorrow, and pray to God for me, for behold, I am already departing from this world. If I have boldness, I shall not forget to pray to the Lord for you, that He may vouchsafe us both to behold His most holy Face, to see one another there, and to dwell together with our venerable fathers, Antony and Theodosius of the Kiev Caves."

Theophilus, with tears, answered him:

"Why do you leave me, Father? Either take me with you, or restore my sight to me here. I know that for my sins I would have fallen dead in the cave before you when you raised my dead brother; but for the sake of your holy prayers, the Lord spared me, awaiting my repentance.

And now you can grant me what I ask of you: either that I depart with you to the Lord, or that I regain my sight."

"Do not grieve, brother," the Venerable Mark answered him, "that you have gone blind in your bodily eyes for the Lord's sake, for with your spiritual eyes you have seen, and you possess true understanding; and I count it good to be the cause of your blindness: I foretold your death, desiring what was profitable for your soul, and desiring to bring your fleshly high-mindedness to humility, for 'a broken and humble heart' (not one boasting of seniority) 'Thou wilt not despise, O God' (Ps. 50:19). Therefore you have no need to see this brief light, but ask the Lord that you may behold His glory in the everlasting light. And do not desire death: it will come, even against your wish. But let this be to you a sign of your departure: three days before your end your blindness will be healed, and you will depart to the Lord with sight, and there you will behold the unending light and the ineffable glory."

Having left such a prophecy concerning Theophilus's end, our Venerable Father Mark himself also finished his temporal life on earth in the Lord and passed into eternal life in heaven, with the Author of the resurrection Jesus Himself[26] and with all the holy prophets, as one who had commanded the dead and prophesied. His wonderworking relics were laid in the cave where he himself had dug his grave, and they give unfailing healings to all who come with faith to his honorable reliquary; there also lie the iron chains which the Venerable one wore upon himself, and the copper cross from which he drank water, which cross he so sanctified with his lips that he imparted to it wonderworking power. For whoever comes with faith and fasting and drinks the holy water from this Honorable Cross receives a miraculous healing, more surely than from any medicinal waters.

The Blessed Theophilus redoubled his sobbing, weeping bitterly both at the parting from his father and teacher, the Venerable Mark, and at his own death, which he awaited every day. Recalling the Cave-Dweller's prophecy, he poured forth streams of tears, but these only multiplied the more. It was a custom of the Blessed Theophilus that,

26. That is, the one who began the resurrection, the first to rise.

when he was occupied in prayer and copious tears flowed from him, he would set a vessel beneath them and weep over it, and over many years he filled it to the brim with his tears. Soon his sight returned to him, according to the promise of the Venerable Mark. Then Theophilus understood that his end was near. Therefore he began to pray to God fervently, that his tears might be pleasing to Him, and raising his hands to heaven, he said thus:

O Lord Jesus Christ, my God, Master, Lover of mankind! Who desirest not the death of sinners but awaitest their conversion, who knowest our infirmities, O holy King, good Comforter, health of the sick, salvation of sinners, strength of the faint, raising of the fallen, I pray to Thee at this hour! Show upon me, the unworthy, Thy mercy; receive the outpouring of my bitter tears! Pour upon me the inexhaustible abyss of Thy compassion, and grant that I be not subjected to temptation in the aerial toll-houses[27] and fall not under the power of the prince of darkness, through the prayers of Thy great saints, our Venerable Fathers Anthony and Theodosius of the Kiev Caves, and of all the saints who have pleased Thee from of old.

When the Blessed Theophilus had uttered this prayer, the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in the form of a beautiful youth and said:

"You pray well, Theophilus, but why do you exalt yourself on account of the quantity of tears you have gathered?"

And the Angel showed him his own vessel, far larger than Theophilus's vessel, filled with a fragrance as of precious myrrh.

"Behold your tears," said the Angel, "which you poured out from your heart in prayers to God and wiped away with your hand or a towel or your garment, or which fell from your eyes to the ground. I have gathered them all into this vessel and kept them by the command of my Lord and Creator. And now I am sent to announce joy to you, so that you may depart with gladness to Him who said: 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted' (Mt. 5:4)."

27. The word "toll-house" (mytarstvo) properly means a customs house where duties were collected; hence, further, a place of extortion and oppression. In the spiritual sense, by the name of the toll-houses are understood the torments of the soul after its departure from the body, before the Judgment of God upon it, carried out in the aerial space by evil spirits.

Having said this, and leaving the vessel in place, the Angel became invisible. The Blessed Theophilus, calling the abbot, told him of the appearance of the Angel and of His words, and also showed him both vessels filled with tears: his own, and the Angelic one, which gave forth a fragrance better than all perfumes; and he asked that after his repose they be poured out upon his body. On the third day after recovering his sight, he departed to the Lord to contemplate the Holy Trinity. His honorable body was laid in a cave beside his beloved brother, the Blessed John, near the Venerable Mark. And they anointed him from the Angelic vessel, whereby the whole cave was filled with fragrance. Then they poured upon him the other vessel of tears, so that he who sowed on earth in tears might reap in heaven with joy. This joy he received through the intercession of his venerable teacher Mark the Cave-dweller and Wonderworker, and by the grace of the God of all consolation, to whom, praised in the Trinity, belongs all glory now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

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Memory of the Venerable Confessor Thaddeus[28]

Память преподобного Фаддея Исповедника

The Venerable Thaddeus lived during the reign of the iconoclastic heresy. When he, together with others, was seized and brought to trial, the impious iconoclasts wished to compel him to trample underfoot a holy icon, but they could not accomplish this. Therefore they did as follows: they laid an icon of the Savior upon the ground and forcibly set St. Thaddeus upon it; and although he resisted most strongly, nevertheless, against his will, he was compelled to step upon the holy icon, being placed upon it by strong men. Then the tormentor said to him:

28. Confessors are those persons who, during persecutions for the faith, openly confessed themselves Christians and endured torments but remained alive. They enjoyed special honor among Christians; thus they were granted the right to reconcile to the Church those who had fallen and renounced.

"Behold, you are trampling upon the icon of your Christ; why then do you resist us any longer? Now it is fitting for you to become of one mind with us."

But the Confessor of Christ answered him:

"Accursed and impious one, filled with all uncleanness! It was not by my own will that I did this; far be it, but I was compelled by your treachery and unrighteous judgment. I worship the icon of Christ my God, and I kiss it, and I desire to die for it with joy."

Put to shame by these words, the impious tormentor commanded that the saint be beaten with clubs until he died. And when they had decided that he was already dead, they dragged him by the feet outside the city. Dragged like a corpse through the marketplace and through the mud, St. Thaddeus was cast down beneath the city wall. Some of the pious Christians found him there and washed the mud from him while he was still breathing. After this St. Thaddeus lived three more days and gave up his spirit to God.[29]

* * *



29. The Venerable Thaddeus the Confessor reposed in 818.

THE THIRTIETH DAY OF DECEMBER

December 30

30 декабря

New Calendar December 30 · Old Calendar January 12 (civil dates)

Suffering of the Holy Virgin Martyr Anysia

Страдание святой мученицы Анисии девицы

In the reign of the impious Emperor Maximian[1] there lived in the renowned city of Thessalonica[2] a maiden named Anysia, the daughter of wealthy Christian parents, who reared her in the fear of God, so that she grew in virtue more swiftly than in years, for her parents nourished her more with the truths of faith and piety than with milk. When the years of her infancy had passed and Anysia had grown into a beautiful maiden, her parents diligently instructed her in all the wisdom of books. Gifted with understanding, Anysia quickly and easily learned everything and showed forth in deed the worthy fruits of her instruction. Filled with the Spirit of God, she possessed a truly angelic disposition, while her face shone with incomparable beauty. At this time she seldom went out of the house, and, hiding her youthful beauty in her chamber, often said to herself with sorrow:

"O deceitful life of youth, which destroys some and is itself destroyed by others! Old age is good, but, alas for me! The length of time fills me with grief, for I must wait many long years for it; many long years separate me from heaven!"

Anysia never ceased to call upon Christ for help, kneeling and shedding abundant tears upon the ground. When her parents departed to the Lord and she became heiress to her father's property, she began to

1. The Emperor Maximian reigned from 284 to 305.

2. Solun, or Thessalonica, a very important and ancient city of Macedonia, lay at the head of the greater Gulf of Solun, or the Ferlian Gulf, on the Aegean Sea (the Archipelago). At present this city, under the name Salonica, is after Constantinople the first commercial and manufacturing city in European Turkey, with a very numerous population.

consider what she should do with her wealth. For her parents had amassed great treasures of silver and gold, extensive estates, immense herds, countless male and female slaves, costly silk and gold-woven garments, and golden vessels adorned with pearls and precious stones and shining with splendor. Seeing all this, St. Anysia said:

"How can I be saved amid so many earthly riches? How can I trample upon the head of the ancient serpent, the devil, and overcome his power? But I know what to do: I shall use the serpent's own cunning against him. As he renews himself each year by casting off his old skin, so shall I rid myself of my riches. For they bring great harm to those who misuse them, and strike all who gather them with an incurable poison; but they bind the greedy and merciless with their fetters and snares. Possession of estates accustoms one to anger and gathers wealth by deceit and unjust measure; costly garments teach a vainglorious gait and draw one into sin; golden chains and necklaces make one lift the head proudly, for they desire to be seen and praised by men. This is what I shall do with them: I shall be their natural mistress before they gain an unnatural mastery over me. I shall truly become their mistress and spend them for good, while also fleeing the temptations they bring forth. I shall find for them a strong safeguard: I shall place them, as in a treasury, in the homes of widows, orphans, and the poor. And my surety is faithful, the Lord, Who will repay me not merely twofold, but a hundredfold, and make me a partaker of eternal life. I shall give away everything in order to receive everything intact, multiplied a hundredfold; and, having given it away, I shall take up the Cross of Christ. For then it will be easy for me to follow Christ, leaving earthly things on earth, that I may dwell with the Angels in heaven. Better to flee a destructive and unclean life and desire life everlasting and spiritual struggles. I shall exchange the temporal for the eternal: I shall honor the incorruptible marriage, remain in chastity, and preserve my body pure for the Creator. Now it is needful to trade while the marketplace is open. Let persecutions and afflictions win for me a reward in heaven. Let torturers and torments open for me the way to the delights of paradise, and let wounds and prison lead me into the bridal chamber

of Christ; for it is not men alone who receive rewards, but women too are granted crowns."

Thus she spoke within herself and prayed with tears:

"Lord Jesus Christ! My Light! Fountain of immortality! Root of incorruption, ineffably conceived in a virgin womb, and after Thy birth preserving Thy Most Pure Mother incorrupt! Good Lord, grant that I too may enter the assembly of virgins and not be separated from Thy bridal chamber! Number me among the wise virgins (Mt. 25:1–12) and deem me worthy to meet Thee with an unquenchable lamp, that I may partake of Thy glory, having brought my struggle to completion without stain!"

Having prayed thus, St. Anysia immediately sold all her property, and not at the price it was worth, nor in the manner customary in market sales and purchases. For she said to the buyer:

"Know that the things being sold belong to the poor and needy. Therefore set a fair price, so that you too may receive some recompense, for the Lord is righteous, loves righteousness, and repays according to righteousness."

When all her property had been sold, she began distributing the money she had received to the poor and to those suffering in prison. Entering every prison herself, the saint not only provided everything necessary, but also served the prisoners with her own hands, especially those who, after many torments and wounds, could not help themselves. She treated them with ointments and bound their wounds, comforted the afflicted, visited those lying on beds of sickness, and helped them from her own wealth. She went through the squares and streets, and with a generous hand gave abundant aid to all the poor and sick whom she found lying on dung heaps. As she did so, she would say to herself:

"I shall seek no comfort or delight in riches which, on the day of judgment, will not equal even a drop of water."

When Anysia had spent everything down to the last coin, leaving nothing for herself, she shut herself up in a chamber and began by the labor of her own hands to earn the food necessary for the body, eating her bread in the sweat of her brow and following the words of the

Apostle: "If any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10), for it is fitting that Christians be nourished by the labor of their hands. Striving in prayer and fasting, Anysia lived as though bodiless. Accustomed to spiritual struggles and a strict life, she spent her days in labor and the reading of the Divine Books, and her nights in psalmody and prayer. The earth served her as a bed; instead of a soft couch she had only a rush mat, and instead of warm blankets, wretched rags. She slept very little, for she would say to herself:

"It is unsafe for me to sleep while my enemy is awake."

The saint shed abundant tears, and her sighs were more numerous than the words that came from her lips. So wholly was she possessed by divine love that when she knelt to pray, it seemed to her that she was falling at the Savior's feet and kissing them, and wiping the dust from the Lord's feet with her hair[3]. This thought opened within her fountains of tears, even as that woman once wept, washing the Master's feet with her tears and wiping them with the hair of her head (Lk. 7:36–50); and she had an unceasing desire to be freed from the bonds of the body and to live with Christ. As she prayed, she struck her breast and said:

Almighty Lord God, Father of Thine Only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and God and Savior, who sittest upon the throne of Thy glory! Thou, whom thousands of thousands of Archangels serve, and before whom stand ten thousand times ten thousand[4] Thrones, Dominions, Principalities and Powers obeying His command, whom the Cherubim praise and the Seraphim unceasingly glorify, crying out the thrice-holy hymn[5]! Thou who didst plunge into the abysses of hell the spirits that rebelled against Thee, and didst bind with unbreakable chains the serpent who had lost Thy grace, casting his throne down to earth, depriving him of heavenly service and of blessed life, and with the shame of the Cross trampling down his pride! Thou who didst send to us from Thy immaculate bosom God the Word, the eternal Savior of

3. Service of St. Anisia, second sticheron at "Lord, I have cried."
4. A *tma* – ten thousand.
5. Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Powers, Authorities, Principalities, Archangels and Angels – the orders of Angels, which the holy Church counts as nine in all.

our souls, born of the Holy Spirit and of Mary the Virgin, and through Him didst seek out the lost, strengthen the weak, and heal the broken! Thee I call upon with all my heart, Thy humble and sinful handmaiden. Thou who knowest the thoughts of every man, who hast kindled in my heart a burning love for Thee, come and save me, Thy unworthy handmaiden, for I desire Thee, I seek Thee, and I cleave to Thee with all my strength. Lord God the Son, receive my prayer, offered to Thee with a contrite heart and a humble spirit. Do not despise me, O Jesus Christ, for whom Thou wast nailed to the Cross, struck upon the cheeks, and for whom Thou didst drink gall with vinegar, taste bitter death, and on the third day rise from the dead and ascend into heaven, and sittest at the right hand of the Father: do not put me to shame and do not cast me out from the number of Thy handmaidens, but grant me a Christian end, according to the likeness of Thy holy Cross! Make me a partaker of Thy sufferings, that I may be found worthy to appear before Thy face. Keep me faithful to Thee! "My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee, and I am afraid of Thy judgments" (Ps. 118:120), "Turn away mine eyes, that they behold not vanity; quicken me in Thy way" (Ps. 118:37), but "open Thou mine eyes," I beseech Thee, "that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Ps. 118:18). Ps. 118. Into Thee have I been committed from my mother's womb; Thou art my Lord! "For my father and my mother have forsaken me" (Ps. 26:10). But Thou, O Lord, hast received me. Make my paths straight, that Thy handmaiden be not filled with shame, but "show me a token for good" (Ps. 85:17), and fulfill my petition, for "Lord, all my desire is before Thee, and my groaning is not hid from Thee" (Ps. 37:10). And again I pray to Thee, O God the Father, help me, that no sin be found in me, Thy handmaiden, for I offer myself to Thee as a sacrifice. Accept me, then, as whole burnt offerings of sheep and oxen, and as ten thousand fat lambs, that my sacrifice may be before Thee. And make me worthy to follow Thy immaculate Lamb, Jesus Christ, with whom to Thee, together with the Holy Spirit, be glory, honor and power unto ages of ages, amen.

Having prayed thus, St. Anysia rose and signed herself with the sign of the Cross. All this the wicked enemy of the human race saw,

and he could not endure her angelic and heavenly life. He beheld her already dwelling in spirit in heaven and desiring with all her heart to suffer for Christ, and he gnashed his teeth at her and sought to shake and overturn her chamber; but seeing her protected everywhere by the sign of the Cross, he fled back, as if pursued by invisible blows. Yet at times he succeeded in suggesting to the saint sloth and despondency, but she at once crushed his guile, fortifying herself as with a wall by unceasing prayer. And the enemy of truth grieved and said to himself:

"Woe is me, the wretch! I drew Angels down with me from heaven, I subdued many mighty ones, and now youths and maidens mock me. They love death more than life, and crowned with it they run to the heavens and leave this world empty to me. The blood of the martyrs being slain consoled me, but their faith and their exploits and their preaching have turned whole cities and peoples. My temples are being destroyed, my oracles fall silent, my altars are overthrown, and the priests who once rejoiced have fallen into dejection. To my destruction the Cross is raised everywhere, and my kingdom comes to ruin, for those who rejoice in torments are terrible in their tombs: they burn me, beat me, and drive me away from everywhere; and what I devised against them has turned to a yet greater misfortune for me. But I know what to do with them: I have found one new stratagem."

And at once the enemy devises the following: desiring to bury in the dust of oblivion the glory of the holy martyrs, so that later generations should not remember them, to make their exploits unknown and deprive them of record, the envious one arranged that Christians should be slain everywhere without trial or examination, not now by emperors and commanders, but by the simplest and lowliest of men. The all-malicious enemy did not understand that God requires not words, but only a good will.

Having destroyed a great multitude of Christians, Maximian, at the devil's instigation, feigned as if he had grown weary. Having sated himself with the blood of the innocent, he became like a bloodthirsty beast, which, when it has glutted itself with flesh and no longer wishes to eat, seems as if gentle and disregards the animals that pass by; so

this impious tyrant, having conceived a loathing for murder, pretended to be gentle. He said:

"It is not fitting that Christians be put to death before the royal eyes. What need is there to examine and judge them, and to record their words and deeds? For these records will be read and handed down from generation to generation by those who confess the same Christian faith, and their memory will then be celebrated forever. Why then should I not command that they be slaughtered like animals, without interrogation or records, so that both their death shall be unknown and their memory be stilled in silence?"

Having taken such a decision, the impious emperor at once issued an edict everywhere that anyone who wished might kill Christians without fear, not dreading either trial or punishment for murder. And Christians began to be slain without number, daily, in all lands and cities and villages, in squares and on roads. Every man who met a believer, as soon as he learned that he was a Christian, at once, without a word, struck him with whatever came to hand, or stabbed him with a knife, or hacked him with a sword or other implement, stone or stick, and killed him like a beast, so that the words of Scripture were fulfilled: "Yea, for Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter" (Ps. 43:23).

In this cruel time for Christians, St. Anysia, burning in her heart with the desire to die for Christ, once went out of her chamber, moved by the Spirit, and intended to go to the church of the Lord. Entering through the so-called Kasantriotic Gates, she heard a commotion among the people. The impious were celebrating that day the feast of the sun and offering their unclean sacrifices. And then one of the royal soldiers, coming toward her and seeing the beautiful maiden, St. Anysia, stopped her, incited by the devil himself, and said:

"Stop, maiden, and tell me, where are you going?"

Seeing his shamelessness and insolence, and judging it to be a hostile temptation, she signed herself with the sign of the Cross before his eyes. But the soldier was not ashamed of the virgin's chaste silence, and regarding it as a dishonor to himself and an expression of contempt, like a beast he seized her, as a wolf seizes a sheep, for he was

truly fiercer than a beast, and with a menacing voice he asked her who she was and whence she was walking. Wishing to free herself from his hands and from his insolent gaze fixed upon her, the lamb of Christ sought to be rid of him by a gentle answer and said:

"I am a handmaiden of Christ, and I am going to the church."

But the shameless soldier, impelled by the demon within him, replied to her:

"I will not let you go, but will lead you to the place where sacrifices are offered to our gods, for today we keep the sun's feast as a festival."

Saying this, he tried by force to remove the covering that was on her head, desiring to uncover her face completely; but she resisted him bravely and did not allow him to uncover her head, but spat in his face and said:

"May my Lord Jesus Christ rebuke you, devil!"

Then the soldier, unable to bear the name of Christ, drew the sword he had with him, and striking her in the side, pierced her through. The holy maiden fell to the earth and, together with the blood that poured out, yielded her holy soul into the hands of Christ her God, whom she had loved and whose sake she had eagerly desired to die for all the days of her life. The passers-by who saw this gathered around her, already dead and lying in her blood; some wept over her youthful years and cruel end, others murmured against the godless emperor who had issued so harsh a law as to destroy innocent people. Some of the faithful took her honorable relics and, having adorned them with honor, buried them two versts from the Kasantriotic Gates, on the left side of the public road. Afterwards a house of prayer was built over the place of Anysia's burial. This took place in the times when Maximian reigned on earth, while over the believers reigned forever our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be honor and glory, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

* * *

Commemoration of the Holy Martyr Philetaerus

Память святого мученика Филетера

Once, when Diocletian arrived at Nicomedia, he was informed about a certain Christian. The emperor at once sent for him, ordering that he be brought before him, and at the sight of him was astonished: the saint was tall of stature and very handsome. Therefore Diocletian called him a god and not a man. And the emperor said to him:

"Tell us: whence are you? And what is your name? And of what origin are you?"

The saint answered:

"I was born and brought up here in Nicomedia, the son of an eparch, a Christian in faith, and I live among Christians."

Calling him to come nearer, the emperor first wished to win him over by gentle speech, while at the same time uttering blasphemies against our Lord Jesus Christ. The Saint drew back from the blasphemer, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, said:

"Let the mouth be stopped of him who dares to blaspheme my Christ, be he emperor or whoever else he may be."

And immediately there was an earthquake, and a terrible thunder was heard, so that the emperor and those about him trembled. After this, Philetaerus was cast into a red-hot furnace. But the Saint prayed, and the furnace fell apart, the fire went out, and he came forth unharmed. The emperor, under the impression of the miracle that had just taken place, and also out of regard for his beauty and noble birth, granted him freedom to go wherever he wished.

Later, when Maximian reigned in Nicomedia,[6] the Saint was again falsely accused before the emperor, and again, standing before him, he confessed Christ our God, Creator of the whole world and its Provider. For this they first began to beat him with rods; the torturers carrying out the execution in their zeal became utterly exhausted, so that they themselves fell to the ground barely alive, while the Saint seemed to feel no pain, as though it were not he but someone else who suffered: thus Christ strengthened him. Then he was hung up and subjected to scraping; afterwards he was cast to be torn by beasts, but the beasts

6. Maximian II Galerius, son-in-law and successor of the Emperor Diocletian, reigned in the eastern half of the Roman Empire from 306 to 311.

only lay down at the feet of the Saint. He was forcibly brought into a temple so that he might be compelled to bow down to the idols, but the martyr raised a prayer to God, and the idols fell apart and were cast down to the ground. Then the emperor ordered the Saint to be put to death by the sword, but the hand of the servant who seized him immediately withered; the same fate befell another executor of the emperor's command: as soon as he raised his hand with the sword over the Saint's head to cut it off, his arm became paralyzed. After this the martyr was put in prison and bound in chains. And since he showed not the slightest inclination to submit, the emperor sentenced him to exile in Proconnesus,[7] whither he was sent, bound. On the way he performed many miracles: he cast out demons, cleansed lepers and healed all manner of other diseases; with a single word he overthrew idols; he touched a magnificently built idol temple, and it collapsed to its foundations. All these miraculous signs, and especially the last, the destruction of the temple, inclined many to faith in Christ, among them six soldiers and their commander, who had been ordered to escort the Saint into exile.

When the martyr and the guard accompanying him reached the regions of Sigria,[8] where the Saint also performed many miracles, those around him said that near here there lived a certain man named Eubiotus,[9] a Christian, who had suffered many and cruel torments for Christ at the hands of the prince, yet remained unharmed and worked great miracles. Hearing of this, St. Philetaerus resolved to go and visit Eubiotus. At this time an Angel of the Lord appeared to the blessed Eubiotus and said:

"Go out of your cell and go to a certain place to meet Philetaerus, your fellow-sufferer."

The hermit at once came out of his cell and began to descend the mountain on which he dwelt. Meanwhile Philetaerus, following the directions of a peasant, set his course to meet Eubiotus, and began to ascend Mount Sigria together with the commander and the six soldiers, who had believed and been baptized and wished not to be parted from

7. Proconnesus – an island in the Sea of Marmara, now Marmara.
8. The Sigrian country – a mountainous region near Cyzicus, in Asia Minor.
9. Commemoration of St. Euviotus the Martyr, 18 December.

him. Having gone a short distance, they met the blessed Eubiotus coming down to them, and greeting one another, they were filled with mutual joy. Rejoicing spiritually, they all ascended the mountain to the dwelling of St. Eubiotus and remained there together for seven days. And the blessed Philetaerus fell asleep in the sleep that he had longed for with love: he departed to Christ God, whom he loved and who loved him, commending his spirit into His hands.[10] The blessed Eubiotus buried him in the place of his dwelling. After eleven days the commander of the escort and the six soldiers who had accompanied the Saint also died, and they were all buried near the relics of the holy martyr.

* * *

Memory of Venerable Zotikos the Orphan-Nourisher

Память преподобного Зотика Сиротопитателя

Venerable Zotikos was of a noble and glorious family and was born in the city of Rome. From his youth he studied all worldly and spiritual wisdom, on account of which the first Christian emperor, Constantine the Great, took him into his service. When this pious sovereign transferred the capital of the empire from Rome to Constantinople,[11] the blessed Zotikos, together with other courtiers of the emperor, moved to this city and here was honored with the rank of magistrian.[12]

But soon, renouncing worldly honor and vanity, he received the priesthood. As Abraham opened his tent, so St. Zotikos opened his house for receiving and feeding the poor; he received into his hospice those deprived of shelter, travelers and the sick; he was a true father to widows, the infirm and the orphaned.

At that time leprosy, a disease that had always raged in the East, grew stronger in the city. To stop the spread of the disease, an order

10. The repose of St. Philetaerus the Martyr took place in the year 311.

11. This was in 330, when the solemn consecration of the city took place, which received the name of New Rome in place of its former name, Byzantium. Indeed, this name was seldom applied to Byzantium, which after the name of Constantine the Great was generally called Constantinople, that is, the city of Constantine.

12. *Magister* – properly "teacher"; but under the Byzantine emperors this name signified one of the highest court offices, something like the present Minister of the Court.

was issued to throw every leper into the sea. The merciful Zotikos, kindled with divine love, went to the emperor and said to him:

"O emperor! Give me, your servant, as much gold as possible, so that I may buy you precious pearls and gleaming stones for your household vessels, since I am very experienced in these matters."

The emperor, loving Zotikos, ordered his request to be granted, and this God-beloved servant of goodness, taking the gold, went out of the imperial palace with gladness and joy. He found the best possible use for the gold: from the soldiers, who had been charged by the eparch with taking lepers and throwing them into the sea, St. Zotikos ransomed the unfortunate with the gold and took them into his care. Near Constantinople, on the opposite shore of the Bosphorus, on a hill he built hospitals for lepers and there gave them comfort. Thus he spent all the gold given him by the great Constantine on the lepers and the sick.

Meanwhile this pious emperor died, and his son Constantius[13] ascended the imperial throne; he did not imitate his father's piety: he fell into the Arian heresy and persecuted the Orthodox. It was also the lot of St. Zotikos to suffer at his hands. On the accusation of malicious men, who told him how Zotikos had taken gold from his father for the purchase of precious stones, the emperor summoned Zotikos and asked him:

"Have you prepared the pearls and other precious stones for our household vessels, for the purchase of which you took so much gold from our sovereign father?"

Zotikos answered:

"Prepare a ship, O emperor, and I will show you such riches as you never had before."

Then, crossing with the emperor to the other shore of the Bosphorus, he led him to the hospitals and, showing him the lepers and the sick, said:

"Here, O emperor, are the fine stones and gleaming pearls that I have obtained for your salvation with no small labor and at great cost."

13. The Emperor Constantius reigned from 337 to 361.

The emperor was angered at the Saint and ordered him to be tied to wild mules and driven over fields and roads. Dragged by the mules over the stones, the venerable one endured grievous torments: all his limbs were torn by the sharp stones; and when the mules then swiftly dragged him down the mountain, his very bones were crushed, and he committed his soul into the hands of the Lord.[14] And in the place where he died a spring of pure and sweet water gushed forth, and by this water all manner of diseases were healed, to the glory of God's servant, and to the glory and honor of the One God in Trinity, glorified and worshipped by all, forever. Amen.

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Memory of Venerable Theodora of Caesarea

Память преподобной Феодоры Кесарийской

The Venerable Theodora labored in the monastery of St. Anne at Caesarea; she lived in the reigns of Leo the Isaurian and of his son Constantine Copronymus[15], and was of a noble and illustrious family. Her father, named Theophilus, held the high rank of patrician; her mother was called Theodora. The latter, being barren for many years, grieved and prayed fervently to God, and especially she turned with tearful supplication to the Most Holy Theotokos, and received a gift that made her like the righteous Anne, the mother of the Theotokos: the barrenness of Theodora was resolved, she conceived and bore a daughter. When the daughter had grown, the mother brought her to the church of St. Anne, as one dedicated to God from birth. The maiden Theodora was received into the monastery, where she lived under the good guidance of the pious abbess and was taught the Divine Books. Meanwhile the God-fearing, virtuous life of the young nun was intolerable to the all-cunning demon, who saw in it his own shame. And so he inspired the iconoclast Emperor Leo with the thought of giving the undefiled lamb in marriage to one of his court officials. She was

14. This was about the middle of the fourth century.

15. Leo III the Isaurian reigned from 717 to 741; he was succeeded by his son Constantine V Copronymus (741–775). These emperors were the first iconoclasts.

taken by force and, torn in bitter grief from the sisters of the monastery, was brought to Constantinople. Here everything was already prepared for her marriage; by the royal will the bridal chamber had been made ready. But the end of this crafty design was unexpected: God, who once punished the Egyptian inflamed with lustful desire for Sarah (Gen. 12:10–20), and who brought down the power of Tiridates, who attempted the chastity of Hripsime[16], miraculously saved Theodora also from defilement through a forced marriage. During the wedding feast the Scythians[17] attacked the capital; the bridegroom was at once sent against the enemies and perished in the very first encounter. Meanwhile, amid the general confusion, the undefiled lamb of Christ, Theodora, taking advantage of the freedom that presented itself, unnoticed by those present at the wedding feast slipped away, and, taking with her gold, silver, jewels and garments adorned with precious stones, went to the seashore, boarded a ship and returned to her monastery, rejoicing and giving thanks to God for everything. When later one of the imperial officials, learning of Theodora's escape, came to the monastery and found her already tonsured and clothed in sackcloth, he left her in peace, by the ordering of God the Provider. Thus finally freed from her pursuers, the Venerable Theodora so wore down her flesh by the labors of abstinence that her bones were visible through her bodily covering. Her food consisted of only a small piece of bread, and that only every two or three days. Her sole garment was of coarse wool; her bed was laid with sharp stones covered with a rough sackcloth: so she kept vigil even during her involuntary, heavy sleep, and often she spent whole nights without sleep. Not content with these

16. Tiridates, king of Armenia, was in friendship with the Roman emperor Diocletian; the latter had chosen the Christian Hripsime as his wife, but she fled and hid in one of the monasteries of Armenia. Diocletian asked Tiridates to find her and send her to him, or, if he wished, to take her himself as his wife. Learning of Hripsime's wondrous beauty, Tiridates was inflamed with a passionate desire to possess her and sent for her; but the messengers, bearing rich gifts, were struck by thunder and returned in terrible dread. Enraged, the king dispatched a whole military detachment; Hripsime was brought before the king and introduced into his bedchamber. The king tried to use violence against her, but – the conqueror of Goths and Persians – he proved unable to overcome the maiden, the bride of Christ.

17. Scythia was the name of the country lying to the northeast of Byzantium and the coast of the Pontus (the Black Sea).

labors, she bound her body with iron chains and so wasted all her joints and bodily members that a foul odor came from her bones. And thus, flourishing in all virtues for many years, she passed into the unfading and blessed life[18].

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Memory of the Venerable Theodora of Constantinople

Память преподобной Феодоры Цареградской

The Venerable Theodora was by birth a Greek woman, had great wealth, and at first lived in Christian marriage. After the death of her husband, in obedience to the commandment of the Lord, she "took up her cross" and received the monastic order, to follow Christ (Mk. 8:34; Mt. 16:24). This was in the reign of Romanus[19], during the lifetime of the Venerable Basil the New, who dwelt in the house of Theodora, in a prayer cell specially built for him, and under whose guidance she led a pious life. Having thus reached old age, she reposed on the thirtieth day of December. And when the soul of the Venerable Theodora, separated from the body, was being borne by the holy Angels, the Venerable Basil, anticipating them, gave them, to aid her soul, as it were a certain ransom, drawing from his bosom a small casket.

This Basil had a disciple named Gregory, who prayerfully asked Basil:

– Where does Theodora abide?

And so once, while Gregory was sleeping, there appeared to him a youth of radiant appearance, who said:

– Go quickly, Venerable Basil calls you, that he may show you Theodora.

Gregory was at once caught up to the gates of paradise, then led into the holy places, and there he saw the Venerable Basil and Theodora, and they all rejoiced together. And Gregory asked:

– Lady Theodora! How did you endure the dreadful hour of death, and how did you escape the wicked spirits?

18. The repose of the Venerable Theodora took place in the second half of the eighth century.
19. The Emperor Romanus I Lecapenus reigned in Byzantium from 919 to 944.

She then told it in order:

– When my soul was separated from my body, I saw terrible Ethiopians, who showed me a scroll with the record of all my former deeds, and they squealed like swine, gnashing their teeth at me. Then the Angels took me and carried me through the toll-houses. The first toll-house was lying; the second, slander; the third, envy; the fourth, false offense out of self-love; the fifth, wrath with fury; the sixth, pride; the seventh, abuse and foul speech; the eighth, extortion and flattery; the ninth, vainglory; the tenth, love of money; the eleventh, drunkenness; the twelfth, bearing grudges; the thirteenth, sorcery; the fourteenth, divination and the use of talismans; the fifteenth, gluttony and idolatry; the sixteenth, adultery; the seventeenth, murder; the eighteenth, theft; the nineteenth, fornication; the twentieth, lack of mercy. And if at some toll-house the testimony of my good deeds alone was insufficient for my justification, the Angels added to my good deeds from the gift of good deeds of the Venerable Basil. So I passed through all the toll-houses without hindrance and was brought into this blessed place. But if the soul is sinful, it is handed over to those Ethiopians, and they, tormenting it, lead it down into torments.

And at once Gregory awoke and told us what he had seen and heard in the state of his sleeping rapture. We, hearing it, marveled and gave thanks to the great God and our Savior, who counted Theodora worthy to be His possession in the heavenly dwellings.

* * *

THE THIRTY-FIRST DAY OF DECEMBER

December 31

31 декабря

New Calendar December 31 · Old Calendar January 13 (civil dates)

Life of Our Venerable Mother Melania the Roman

Житие преподобной матери нашей Мелании Римляныни

As good fruits are born on a good tree, so a holy branch springs up from a holy root. We see this in the example of the Venerable Melania, who was born of pious Christian parents. Her father and grandfather were among the highest senators. When she came of age, Melania ardently desired to keep her virginity undefiled, and often with all her strength she begged her parents for this. But since she was their only daughter, and there was no other heir to their countless estates and riches, when the saint reached the age of fourteen they gave her in marriage, against her will, to a man of equal nobility named Apinian, who was in his seventeenth year. When the marriage had been concluded, Melania did not abandon her thought and desire to keep, if not virginity, then at least chastity, and by every means she persuaded her husband to abstinence, often admonishing him and speaking to him with tears:

"How happy we would be if we lived together in purity, working for God in our youth without carnal union, which I have always desired and still desire! Then we would lead together a beautiful and God-pleasing life. But if your passion, so natural to youth, overcomes you and prevents you from fulfilling my request, so that you cannot conquer your carnal desires, then leave me and do not be an obstacle to my desire. As a ransom for myself I will give you all my riches, my male and female slaves, my treasures, gold and silver, and my other countless possessions. Take possession of all of it, only allow me to be free of carnal relations."

Having heard such words, Apinian did not refuse entirely to fulfil her desire, but neither did he give her full consent, and only said kindly:

"This cannot be until we have an heir to our estates. When such an heir is born to us, then I too will not fall behind your good intention, for it is not good if a wife surpasses her husband in good works and in striving toward God. Let us wait until God gives us the fruit of our marriage, and then together we will embrace the life you desire."

Melania agreed to her husband's proposal, and God sent them a daughter. After her birth, Melania dedicated her to virginity by vow, as though paying a debt: she wished that her daughter might keep what she herself could not keep, having been given in marriage against her will.

Then, preparing for another life, she began to accustom herself to abstinence and the mortification of the body: she fasted, deprived herself of every indulgence of the flesh, would not wear fine clothes or precious women's adornments, and did not go to the bath. And when her husband or her parents urged her to go to the bath, she would not uncover her body, and would come out having washed only her face; she forbade her maidservants to speak of this to anyone and gave them gifts so that they would keep silent. At the same time she demanded from her husband the fulfilment of his promise:

"We already have," she said, "an heir to our estate. Let us therefore live without marital relations, as you promised."

But he did not listen to his wife.

Melania, seeing his refusal, resolved to flee secretly to an unknown land, leaving her father, mother, husband, child and all her wealth, so strongly was she seized by the striving toward God and the desire to live in purity. She would have done so at once, had she not been restrained by the counsel of some prudent people, who reminded her of the following word of the Apostle: "To the married I give charge, yet not I but the Lord: let not the wife depart from her husband," and again: "For how knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" (1 Cor. 7:10–16).

Thus, restrained by the thought of saving her husband, she gave up her plan of flight. Nevertheless it was hard for her to fulfil the marital duty. She secretly wore a coarse hair shirt on her body, and only when she knew she would be alone with her husband did she take it off, so that her husband would not learn of such a life of hers. But somehow the sister of her father learned of this and began to mock the hair shirt, reproaching and reviling the saint on account of it. Melania begged her with tears not to tell anyone what she had learned. Soon after this Melania conceived a second time, and the time of her delivery was drawing near. It came to the day of the memory of the holy martyr Lawrence. The whole night the saint spent without sleep, praying on her knees and singing psalms. At the same time she strove to overcome the natural pains of childbirth. Morning came, but she did not cease her laborious prayer. The cruel pains of the woman in labour grew to the utmost degree, yet she still bent her knees in prayer, and at last she was exhausted from her all-night labour of prayer and from her natural suffering. Then in grievous agony she bore a male infant. Having received holy baptism, the infant at once departed from this world to the heavenly fatherland. After this delivery Melania fell gravely ill and was near death. Her husband, standing by her bed, was himself nearly dead from grief and sorrow for her. In his distress he hastened to the church, where with weeping he prayed to God, asking Him for the healing of his beloved wife. Melania, seeing that the time was favourable for winning her husband over to her intention, sent word to him while he was still in church:

"If you wish that both I and you should live, give a promise before God that you will never touch me again, and that we shall both live in purity until the end of our lives."

Melania's husband, loving her beyond words and setting her health above his own, submitted to her will and vowed before God to live with her in purity. When the messenger returned and told this to Melania, she rejoiced and felt better. Her bodily sickness gave way to spiritual joy, and Melania glorified the Most High, who had helped her, fulfilling through her illness the dearest desire of her heart.

When Melania rose from her sickbed, her daughter, the lovely shoot of virginity promised to God, departed to Him. Her death inclined Apinian still more to keep chastity, all the more since Melania did not cease to persuade him to this.

"Do you see," she said when their daughter died, "how God Himself calls us to a pure life? If it had pleased Him that our carnal marriage should continue, He would not have taken our children from us."

Thus Apinian and Melania, after their natural carnal marriage, entered into a higher, spiritual marriage, and urged one another on to virtue, exercising themselves in fasting, prayer, labours and the mortification of the flesh. They agreed to give all their estates to Christ in the persons of the poor, and to renounce the world entirely and become monastics. But Melania's parents would by no means permit this. And so one night, when Apinian and Melania were much grieved and consulted with one another how they might free themselves from the intricate nets of the world, the divine grace suddenly overshadowed them from above. They perceived a great fragrance descending from heaven, such as the mind cannot grasp nor the tongue describe, and they were filled with such spiritual delight that they forgot all their sorrow. From then on the saints were seized with an even greater thirst for spiritual goods: the world and all that is in the world became loathsome to them, and they resolved, casting everything aside, to flee somewhere and become monastics. But the providence of God prepared for them another path to the attainment of their desire.

Soon Melania's father died, and Apinian and Melania became free to act. But since they had great riches, which they had vowed to dedicate to Christ, they did not at once part from the world and their fatherland. For the time until they had given everything to the poor, they chose as their dwelling one of their estates in a suburb of Rome, and lived there, strictly keeping their chastity. At the time when this blessed couple had chosen such a God-pleasing life, Apinian was entering his twenty-fourth year, and Melania was completing her twentieth[1]. Truly it is a great wonder that in those years, when youth usually burns with the

1. This change in Melania's life took place in 401.

fire of carnal passions, this holy couple, living a life above the nature of the flesh, remained unscorched, like the youths in the furnace of Babylon.

All this came about under Melania's guidance. As a wise handmaid of the Lord, she strictly watched both over herself and over her husband, so that she was for her husband a teacher, an instructor and a guide on the way of the Lord. Living such a wondrous life, they sold their estates and freely gave help to those in need.

At this time God sent them a trial. A brother of Apinian, named Severus, seeing the blessed life of this couple, began to regard Apinian and Melania as nothing and to take away some of their estates. When he saw that they did not resist him and did not concern themselves with what had been taken, he began to covet more and to appropriate everything. Apinian and Melania, in their guilelessness, endured this, placing their hope in God. Only one thing grieved them: seeing the estates that they had dedicated to Christ falling into the hands of an envious man, they sorrowed that the property of the poor was being plundered. But the Lord, Who defends His servants and delivers them out of the hands of those who wrong them, raised up against Severus the pious Empress Verina[2]. She had heard of the God-pleasing life of Apinian and Melania, and, learning that Severus was taking their estates, she summoned them to her and received them with honor. When the pious spouses appeared before the Empress in poor clothing and with humble mien, the Empress marveled greatly at their poverty and humility; then, embracing Melania, she said to her: "Blessed art thou, who hast chosen such a life!" At the same time the Empress promised to take vengeance on Severus on their behalf. But Melania and Apinian asked her not to resort to vengeance, but only to admonish Severus, that he should no longer do them wrong.

"It is better for us," they said, "to endure wrongs than to wrong anyone, for the Divine Scripture commands that one who has been struck on the cheek should turn to the offender the other cheek as well (Mt. 5:39). We thank thee, Lady, for wishing to defend us graciously,

2. Verina was the wife of the Emperor Honorius, who ruled the western half of the Roman Empire from 396 to 423.

but we do not ask that vengeance be taken on Severus. On the contrary, we ask that no evil be done to him on our account. It is enough for us if from now on he ceases to treat us ill and to take what belongs not to us but to Christ and to the servants of Christ, to orphans and widows, to the poor and the needy."

They also asked the Empress that they might be permitted to sell freely, without any hindrance, their large estates, which consisted of cities and villages located not only in Italy, in the Roman region, but also in Sicily[3], in Spain, Gaul and Britain. So wealthy were Melania's parents that, apart from the Emperor, there was no one richer than they. The Empress granted the request of Apinian and Melania, and they were given freedom to sell without hindrance all their estates, wherever they might be. Melania wished to give the Empress's sister some costly gifts, but she would accept nothing of what was offered, considering it sacrilege to take anything from things dedicated to Christ.

At last Apinian and Melania returned with great honor from the imperial palace to their place of residence.

The extent of the wealth that they gave to Christ may be judged from the fact that at that time no one could buy their house in Rome at a proportionate price. Only later, when the house was set on fire by the barbarians and greatly damaged by the fire, was it sold for less than its value, and the money received from its sale was distributed to the poor. Thus it may be affirmed with certainty that Apinian and Melania showed greater zeal toward God than Job. For he gave thanks to God when he lost his riches against his will, whereas these willingly renounced such riches, striving for poverty. At first such a life was full of sorrows for them and seemed very difficult, but afterwards it became light and full of every consolation: for Christ's "yoke is easy" and "burden is light" (Mt. 11:30).

The devil attempted to tempt the pious spouses with covetousness. Once, when a great quantity of gold had been brought to them for the estates they had sold, he began to implant in their souls a certain pas-

3. Sicily is a large island in the Mediterranean Sea near the southwestern extremity of the Apennine peninsula (Italy).

sion for gold. But Melania, perceiving the snares of the ancient serpent, at once crushed his head, reckoning gold as dust and spending it without restraint upon the poor. The blessed woman related the following about herself:

"I had one estate with a house in a high and beautiful place; it was better than all our other estates. On one side the sea stretched out, and from the hill one could see the ships sailing and the fishermen catching fish. On the other side rose tall trees, and fields sown with grain, gardens and rich vineyards could be seen; in one place splendid baths had been built, in another springs of water; there the singing of various birds was heard, and here were all kinds of beasts in enclosures prepared for them, and the hunting of them was successful. And the enemy suggested to me the thought of sparing this estate for the sake of its beauty and not selling it, but keeping it for myself to live in. But by God's grace I perceived that this was the snare of the enemy, and, turning my mind to the heavenly dwellings, I immediately sold that estate and gave the money I received to my Christ."

After the pious spouses sold their Italian estates, their alms flowed, like many-watered rivers, to every corner of the earth. They sent much alms to Mesopotamia, Phoenicia, Syria, Egypt and Palestine—to churches and to men's and women's monasteries, to hospices and hospitals, to orphans and widows, to those in chains and in prisons, and also for the ransom of captives. Both west and east were filled with the bounty that came from their hands. Sometimes they bought whole islands in quiet and sparsely populated places, and, having built monasteries there, gave them over for the support of the clergy. Everywhere they adorned the holy churches with gold and silver, with priestly vestments of gold-woven cloth, and they spared no money for the splendor of the Church. Then, leaving a small part of their lands in Italy unsold, they, together with Melania's mother, who was still alive, boarded a ship and sailed to Sicily, partly to sell their estates there, and partly to visit the blessed Bishop Paulinus, their spiritual father.

Soon after their departure, barbarians[4] attacked Rome and laid waste with sword and fire all the surroundings of the city and the

whole Italian land. The saints did well in succeeding, with God's help, in selling their estates before this calamity. For what was destined to perish in vain, without any reward from God, was turned for them into a hundredfold recompense in eternal life. Moreover, they preserved their temporal health intact, leaving Italy as Lot left Sodom[5], before its cruel devastation by the barbarians. Having visited Sicily, and on the way there having met with Saint Paulinus, Bishop of Nola[6], they settled their affairs concerning the estates they had there, and sailed for Libya and Carthage[7].

As they sailed over the sea, a strong storm and great tempest arose, which lasted for many days. The fresh water on the ship was already running low, and yet there were many rowers and servants, and all of them suffered from severe thirst. Saint Melania, understanding that the Lord did not bless the route they had chosen to Libya, ordered the sails turned before the wind, trusting in God that He would direct the ship wherever He willed. Caught up by the wind, they put in at a certain island. Shortly before their arrival, barbarians had suddenly attacked this island, seized it, and carried away with them a great multitude of men and women, and sent word to the remaining inhabitants that, if they wished, they should quickly ransom the captives, for otherwise all the captives would be beheaded. The population of the island was in great sorrow, since, owing to their scanty means, few could pay the ransom.

At that time the ship on which Melania and Apinian were sailing put in at the island. The bishop of that island, hearing that a ship from Rome had come to them, came to ask for help in ransoming the captives, and received more than he had expected. Moved with compassion,

4. The Goths are meant, a Germanic people, who besieged Rome in 408, 409 and 410, and at last sacked it.

5. Lot was the nephew of the patriarch of the Hebrews, Abraham. Having separated from his uncle, he settled with his family in Sodom, a city that stood in the valley on the site of which the Dead Sea was formed. When the men of Sodom angered God by their sins and God condemned Sodom to destruction, Lot, forewarned of this by an Angel, fled from Sodom together with his wife and daughters.

6. The city of Nola was in southern Italy, in Campania. St. Paulinus was bishop in Nola from 409 to 431. His memory is kept on January 23.

7. In North Africa, almost opposite Italy.

Melania and Apinian gave as much gold as was required for the ransom of all the captives. When they set sail from that island, a gentle and favorable wind blew, and soon they reached Carthage. Disembarking there, they performed their abundant works of mercy, bestowing benefactions on churches and monasteries, and easing the condition of the poor and the sick.

Doing such good works, they settled in a town not far from Carthage, which was called Thagaste. The bishop of Thagaste was Alypius, friend of the blessed Augustine[8], a man skilled in speech and teaching, who wisely instructed all who came to him. Having come to love this good pastor, Apinian and Saint Melania richly adorned his church and bought for it many properties; besides this, they founded there two monasteries, one for men, for eighty monks, and another for women, for one hundred and thirty nuns, and they provided these monasteries with land and everything necessary. Saint Melania began gradually to accustom herself to ever stricter fasting: at first she ate every other day, then every two days, and finally went without food the whole week, except on Saturday and Sunday. Sometimes she occupied herself with copying books, for she wrote very beautifully and without errors; sometimes she made garments for the poor. The books she copied she sent to be sold, and the money earned by this labor she distributed to the poor. She also zealously occupied herself with reading Holy Scripture. When her hands grew weary from work or from writing, she exercised herself in reading, and, as it were, gave work to her eyes. If her eyes too grew tired from long reading, her hearing helped her, for she would have others read while she herself listened. It was her custom to read through the Old and New Testaments three times each year; and the most important passages she kept in her memory and always had upon her lips. At night she slept scarcely two hours, and that not on a bed but on the ground, on a poor mat. She said that one must always keep watch, because we do not know at what hour the thief will come.

She trained the maidens who served her to this ascetic manner of life, and she persuaded many young men also to live in purity and to

keep virginity. She won many unbelieving souls for Christ and brought them to God.

After seven years of life in Carthage, Melania desired to see the holy places in Jerusalem. She boarded a ship with her mother and with Apinian, who had formerly been her husband and was now her spiritual brother and fellow-faster, and they sailed together by sea. The ship on which they sailed reached Alexandria safely with a favorable wind. Here they greeted St. Cyril, Archbishop of Alexandria. Having enjoyed fellowship with him, they set out again by sea and arrived at the holy city of Jerusalem. On arriving there, they walked about the holy places, which our Lord and the Most Pure Mother of God had sanctified with their most holy feet, with great reverence and with indescribable joy in their hearts. Beside the Tomb of the Lord the Blessed Melania remained every night from evening for prayer. There she offered warm supplications to Christ the Lord, weeping, falling down before the Tomb of the Lord, embracing it and kissing it.

While Melania and Apinian were staying in Jerusalem, a faithful friend of theirs sold the estates they had left in Italy and sent the money to them in Jerusalem.

Having been in Jerusalem, they wished to go on to Egypt, to see the desert fathers there and to serve them from their property. They set out on the journey by sea, but they left their mother, who was very old and worn out, in the holy city. At the same time she was charged with building a house for their dwelling on the Mount of Olives.

In Egypt Melania, together with her spiritual brother Apinian, visited the desert fathers and received great benefit for the soul from their God-inspired words. At the same time they showed great generosity there to those in need. But they also met many non-covetous fathers who would not accept the alms offered them and fled from gold as from the sting of a serpent. Among these was one named Ephestion, who refused to accept some gold coins when they begged him to take them. Going around his cell and examining the possessions of the hermit, Melania found only a mat and a water-jug, a little dry bread, and a box

8. Alypius was elected to the episcopal see in Thagaste in 391.

in which there was salt. She quietly put the gold into this box and covered it with salt. When they had gone out from the hermit, this act of Melania was not hidden from the elder. He, finding the gold, ran after them, calling loudly that they should stop and wait for him. When they stopped, the elder showed them the gold, which he held in his hand, and said:

"I have no need of this; I do not know what to use it for. Take back your property."

They answered:

"If you do not need it, give it to others."

But the elder replied:

"Who here needs this, and for what? You see that the place here is empty."

They still did not want to take back their gold from the elder, and then he threw it into the river and returned to his cell.

After that the travelers returned to Alexandria, then to Nitria[9], visiting the dwellings of the hermits everywhere, like bees flying among various flowers and gathering from them. Then they returned to Jerusalem, enriched with many useful admonitions received from the holy hermits. And, as they hoped, they found a house already prepared for them on the Mount of Olives. There they settled.

Melania shut herself up in a narrow cell, having made the vow that she would see no one and that no one would see her. Only once a week her mother and her spiritual brother Apinian visited her. In this seclusion she spent fourteen years. At this time Melania's mother reposed, full of good works and of blessed hope. The saint, having performed the due commemoration for her departed mother, again shut herself up in an even narrower and very dark room, and spent one year in it. Fame of her spread everywhere, and many began to come to her for spiritual benefit. Then Melania came out of her seclusion in order to serve the salvation of others. She founded a monastery, gathering more than ninety maidens. Many notorious sinners also came to her, and, instructed by

9. Nitria is a mountain to the south of Alexandria, west of the river Nile, near the Libyan desert. The name of the mountain derives from the natron or saltpeter in the lakes bordering the mountain.

her on the path of repentance, they began to lead a God-pleasing life. For her monastery Melania chose an abbess, while she herself became a servant to all, like a slave, and cared for all as a mother. She taught the sisters various virtues: first purity, then love, without which no virtue can be perfect, then humility, obedience, patience, and guilelessness. For their edification she told them the following story. "To a certain great elder there once came a young man, wishing to become his disciple. And the elder, showing from the very beginning what a disciple ought to be, told him to take a staff and to strike hard at a pillar standing at the gate, lunging at it and striking it with his feet. The disciple, obeying the elder, struck the lifeless pillar with all his strength. The elder asked the young man:

"Did this pillar, which you struck, offer you any resistance, and was it offended? Did it leave its place, or did it throw itself upon you?"

The young man answered:

"No!"

Then the elder said:

"Strike it even harder, and accompany the blows with the most cruel words: insult it, reproach it, dishonor it, revile it, and slander it in every way."

When the young man had done this too, the elder asked:

"Did the pillar that you reviled become angry with you, did it say anything against you? Did it murmur or reproach you?"

The young man answered:

"No, Father! And how could an insensible and lifeless pillar become angry?"

The elder said again:

"If you can be like this pillar, not growing angry at those who strike you, not running from the blows, not contradicting those who command you, not answering reproach with reproach, if amid all sorrows you remain constantly unshaken, like a pillar, then come, be our disciple. Otherwise do not even approach our doors."

By such a story the Blessed One taught the sisters patience and guilelessness, and they were edified by this example, which was to their benefit. Teaching and instructing the sisters of the monastery she had

founded, St. Melania at the same time built in that monastery a splendid church and took care that the church should be consecrated with the holy relics of the Prophet Zechariah, the Protomartyr Stephen, and the forty martyrs.

After these events, her spiritual brother, who had formerly been her husband according to the flesh, the Blessed Apinian, having pleased the Lord God, departed to Him already in the monastic rank. Melania buried him with honor, and afterward she herself began to prepare for her departure, awaiting a swift death. But the Providence of God prolonged her life for the salvation of others. After Apinian's death, Melania founded also a men's monastery and spent on it her last remaining property, giving everything to the glory of God. Thus she who had long since acquired poverty in spirit became poor also in body.

At that time a letter came to Melania from Constantinople, from her uncle Volusian the Roman. This Volusian, who then held the office of Roman *anthypatos*[10], had been sent to Byzantium on a special commission from the Western emperor. Having arrived in the East, he wished to see his niece, the Venerable Melania. Therefore he deliberately sent to her in Jerusalem, asking her to come to him in Byzantium and to see him. At first Melania did not want to go to her uncle, since he adhered to the Hellenic polytheism; but then, on the advice of her spiritual fathers, she went to him, moved by the hope of turning him to God. On the way, in every city where the saint stopped, great honor was paid to her everywhere, for God glorifies those who glorify Him. Hierarchs and priests, the city elders and the people met her, and all received her with love, as if she were a stranger from heaven, because the light of her virtues and holy life shone for the whole world. In the capital itself she was also received with great honor by the Emperor Theodosius II, his empress Eudocia, and Patriarch Proclus. She found her uncle Volusian sick. Seeing her, the uncle greatly marveled at her monastic garb and at her mortification of the flesh, for her face had withered from long fasts and labors, and her former beauty had faded. And Volusian exclaimed:

10. An *anthypatos* was the governor of a region that comprised several provinces.

"What have you become, beloved Melania!"

But why tell it at length? Partly Melania herself, partly St. Proclus, but above all the God-inspired conversation of this pious servant of Christ and her useful exhortations soon brought it about that her uncle rejected Hellenic impiety and received holy baptism. Having been granted the Holy Mysteries, a few days later he gave up his spirit to God and was buried by the hands of St. Melania.

During her fairly long stay in Byzantium, Melania turned many from the heresy of Nestorius to the right faith; this heresy at that time greatly troubled the Church. She also kept many Orthodox from apostasy, for the Lord granted her such grace that the cunning heretical arguments of the Nestorians could in no way overcome her. The Venerable One knew the Scriptures excellently, having spent all the years of her life reading them and being filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit. From morning till evening various people conversed with her and asked her about Orthodoxy, and she gave wise answers, so that the whole capital marveled at her wisdom. Afterward the Blessed One returned again to Jerusalem and, drawing near her end, prepared for a good departure.

She was given the gift of healing, and she healed many diseases. Of these healings performed by her, let us relate some, as proof of the divine grace that dwelt in her.

Empress Eudocia[11], who had named the Venerable Melania her spiritual mother, arrived in Jerusalem, partly to venerate the holy places and partly to visit her spiritual mother.

On the way she dislocated her foot and suffered greatly, so that she could not set it down. But when St. Melania merely touched her foot, it became whole.

A young woman was tormented by a demon, which had so sealed her lips that they could not be opened; she could not utter a word or take any food, and she was in danger of death, more from the long deprivation of food than from the torments of the demon. This woman the Venerable Melania healed by her prayer, anointing her with holy

11. Empress Eudocia was the wife of the Eastern Emperor Theodosius II, who reigned from 408 to 450.

oil. The demon came out of her, her lips were opened to glorify and thank God, and having taken food she became well.

Another woman was with child, and the time came for her to give birth; but she could not do so, for the child had died in her womb. Tormented by terrible pains, she was at the point of death. But St. Melania helped this woman by her prayers. As soon as a girdle was placed upon the breast of the sick woman, she was delivered of her burden: the dead fruit came out of her, she felt relief, and she began to speak, whereas before she had not been able to utter a single word.

Foreseeing her departure to God, the Venerable went round the holy places in Jerusalem and its environs, in Bethlehem and Galilee. When the feast of the Nativity of Christ came, she was at the All-night Vigil in the cave where Christ was born, and there she said to one of the sisters, her kinswoman, who was constantly with her, that this was the last time she would keep the feast of the Nativity of Christ with them. The saint's kinswoman, hearing these words, wept bitterly. Then, on the day of St. Stephen the First Martyr, Melania was at the All-night Vigil in his church, which stands in the monastery she had founded. As the sister read of the slaying of the holy First Martyr, she added on her own that she was reading to them for the last time. A great lamentation then arose over her among the sisters, for they understood that the saint would soon leave this world. Melania, however, as was her custom, consoled them for a long time with her God-inspired words, and taught them the virtues. Then she went into the church and began to pray:

"O Lord my God, whom I chose and loved from the beginning, whom I preferred to a carnal husband, to riches, glory and worldly delights, to whom from my birth I entrusted my body and my soul, for whose sake I gave myself to abstinence, so that my bones clave to my flesh, who guided my right hand and instructed me by Thy inspiration, hear now my prayerful cry. And let these my tears move the streams of Thy mercy toward me. Cleanse my sinful defilements, both voluntary and involuntary. Prepare for me a way to Thee without any confusion or hindrance, that the evil spirits of the air may not hold me back. Thou knowest, O Immortal One, our mortal nature. Thou knowest, O Lover

of mankind, that there is no man without defilement; there is none on whom the enemy could not find some fault, even if he lived but a single day. But Thou, O Master, disregarding all my sins, make me pure at Thy Judgment."

Thus prayed St. Melania, and before she had finished her prayer she began to feel bodily pain. But although she was weakened by sickness, she did not cease her labor: she went to the customary church services and from morning instructed the sisters with exhortations. Then she partook of the Most Pure and Divine Mysteries at the hands of the bishop of Eleutheropolis[12], who had come with his clergy to visit her, and she awaited the approach of death. In the meantime she comforted her kinswoman, who bitterly lamented the parting from the saint, as well as all the sisters; and having taken leave of all with a final kiss, she spoke these words:

"As it has pleased God, so it has come to pass."

With these words, lying upon a plain bed, she gave up her spirit into the hands of God, closing her eyes firmly and folding her hands crosswise upon her breast[13].

For her burial there gathered monks and nuns from all the monasteries that stood around the holy city, and all night they sang psalms over her; then they buried her with honor. Her holy soul went to the Lord God, whom she had loved and to whom she had labored diligently all the days of her life. And now, partaking with all the saints of His glory, she also intercedes there for us sinners before the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the One God in Trinity. To Him be glory forever. Amen.

* * *

12. Eleutheropolis was a city in southern Palestine, on the road between Jerusalem and Gaza. At present a village lies here, at the exit from the Shephelah plain into the hill country of Judah. Not far from this village lie the ruins of ancient Eleutheropolis.

13. This was on December 31 in the year 439.

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