

The Lives of the Saints

Whose Icons Adorn St. Paul's Education Building

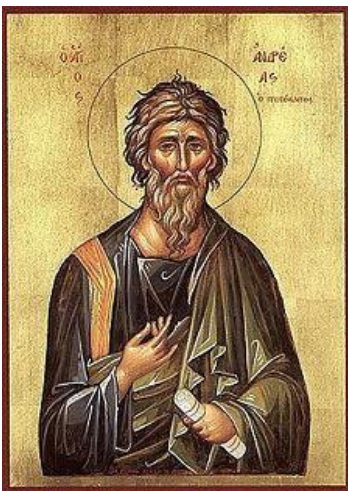


The Feast of All Saints

Their memory is celebrated the Sunday after Pentecost

The Sunday of All Saints is a festival of holiness in the life of the Church that is celebrated each year on the Sunday after Pentecost, the day on which we celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles in Jerusalem and the beginning of the Church. Liturgically, this makes perfect sense, as it is the Holy Spirit who is the source of all holiness, all sanctity, in the life of the Church. It is the Holy Spirit that makes it possible for us to fulfill God's command to "be holy, for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16). Saints may be found in every country and every culture, ranging from Greece, Turkey and Russia to Serbia,

Romania and America; from Palestine, Libya and Egypt to France, Ireland and Italy. Saints come from all walks of life: men and women, husbands and wives, kings and queens, soldiers, merchants, slaves, students, peasants and aristocrats, bishops and priests, monks and nuns. All were ordinary people who chose to live their lives in complete dedication to God. The saints, no matter what country they were from, language they spoke or station in life, never betrayed their innermost beliefs about Christ and strove to live their lives in complete honesty and integrity, no matter what the cost. They lived with courage and determination, love and humility, grace and joy. The saints reveal human potential at its finest and serve as role-models for us to follow today. To know and understand the saints of the Church is to deepen our relationship to their Master and ours, our Lord Jesus Christ.



St. Andrew the Apostle

His memory is celebrated on November 30th

A Galilean fisherman from Bethsaida in Israel, Andrew was the first-called of the followers of Christ, to whom he brought his brother, Peter (John 1:35-42). Initially a disciple of John the Baptist, Andrew began to follow the Lord Jesus after John pointed Him out in a crowd by the Jordan River and said: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." Always named as among the first four in the lists of the Twelve Apostles in the Gospels, it was Andrew, the Gospel of John tells us, who brought the first Greeks to see Jesus in Jerusalem shortly before His crucifixion and resurrection. Like the other Apostles,

Andrew suffered persecution and imprisonment during his ministry of preaching and teaching the Gospel. The founder of the Church of Constantinople, he was executed for being a Christian in Patras, Greece in 60 AD by being crucified on an X-shaped cross. To

prolong his suffering, the Roman governor Aegaeates ordered that he was to be bound, not nailed to the cross. It took him two days to die. His relics were taken to Constantinople and enshrined there in 357 AD, but were removed and taken to Italy during the Latin conquest of the city by the Crusaders in 1204 AD. Recently, in an ecumenical gesture of good will, Pope Paul VI returned his relics to Constantinople and Patras.

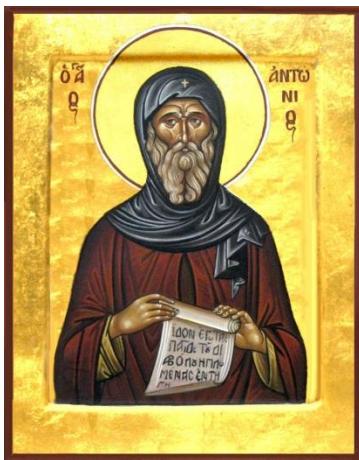


The Annunciation to the Theotokos

This event is celebrated on March 25th

The Annunciation (in Greek, *evangelismos*, meaning “the announcing of good news”) is the liturgical name of the encounter that took place between the Archangel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, as recorded in the first chapter of Luke’s Gospel. There the Archangel Gabriel announces to the Theotokos that she has been chosen to give birth to the Son of God for the salvation of the world. Her response, given freely, was: “Behold the slave of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word.” On this day, the Church commemorates not only the divine initiative by which God in His loving kindness took flesh from the Virgin to draw near to us and redeem us, but also Mary’s response

by which she humbly and lovingly accepted the vocation set before her. Mary’s answer to the Archangel Gabriel was not a foregone conclusion. She was not merely a passive instrument but an active participant with a free and positive part to play in God’s great plan of salvation. In the Church we remember Mary very specifically for her “Yes!” to God’s will for her life and in this sense she is a model for every Christian, an icon of what it truly means to be a disciple and accept God’s call in our life.



St. Anthony the Great

His memory is celebrated on January 17th

St. Anthony, called “the father of monasticism,” was born in central Egypt in 251 AD, the son of well-to-do Christian parents. Their deaths left him responsible for a considerable estate and a younger sister. Around 269 AD, at the age of 18, he heard the Gospel read in church and applied to himself the words of the Lord Jesus to the rich young man: “Go, sell what you possess, give it to the poor and come, follow me” (Mark 10:21). After settling his sister in a convent, he ultimately sold everything he owned, gave the proceeds to the poor and dedicated himself entirely to God.

Around 285 AD he went alone into the desert to live in complete solitude. It was in this solitude and silence that Anthony heard clearly the Word of God for his life. After 20 years in solitude, Anthony emerged “as one initiated into the mysteries of God and inspired by the Holy Spirit, a physician given by God to Egypt through whom the Lord healed many people,” as his friend and biographer, St. Athanasios of Alexandria, said in his book, *The Life of Anthony*. This book, one of the earliest Christian biographies, became an immediate literary and theological sensation throughout the ancient world and a prototype for all later writing about the lives and witness of the saints. As a result, its fame spread and people who thirsted for authentic Christian spirituality sought his

counsel in greater and greater numbers, populating the deserts of Egypt. St. Anthony died in 356 AD, at the age of 105.

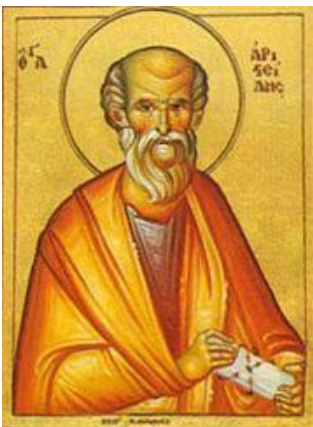
The Archangels Michael and Gabriel and all the hosts of angels

They are celebrated on November 8th



The Archangels Michael and Gabriel and all the ranks of the angelic hosts are commemorated each year on November 8th. The Scriptures witness to the reality of angels from Genesis to the Book of Revelation. What are angels? The word “angel” is a Greek word that means “messenger.” Angels are purely spiritual beings that have often served as God’s messengers at critical times in human history. In the Old Testament, the Archangel Michael appears to the prophet Daniel. In the New Testament, the Archangel Gabriel appears to both Zechariah to announce the birth of his son, John the Baptist; and to Mary the Theotokos to announce the birth of her son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Angels comfort the Lord Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane shortly

before His crucifixion and announce His resurrection to the women who come to His tomb and find it empty. At the Second Coming, the Gospel of Matthew tells us that the Lord will be escorted by the all the angels. The Scriptures mention many different kinds or ranks of angels. The cherubim and the seraphim are mentioned throughout the Old Testament and are particularly associated with the Temple in Jerusalem and the Ark of the Covenant by the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel. In fact, the angelic hymn that Isaiah heard sung by the seraphim in the Temple, “Holy, holy, holy Lord God of *Sabaoth*: Heaven and earth are full of Your glory” is still sung at every celebration of the Liturgy to this day. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul, in several of his letters, mentions other types of angels such as thrones, powers and principalities. The role of angels has been significant in the history of our salvation as well as in praise and worship of the living God. We believe that if we listen carefully to the message of the angels, we can often hear the voice of God in our lives.



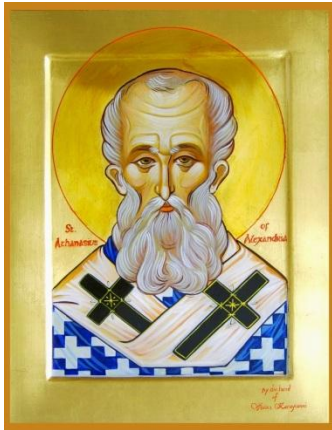
St. Aristedes the Philosopher

His memory is celebrated on August 31st.

St. Aristedes lived in Athens in the early 2nd century AD at a time when Christians were being persecuted by their non-Christian neighbors. When the Roman emperor Hadrian visited Athens in 125AD, Aristedes wrote him a letter defending Christianity and urging the emperor to allow Christians to practice their faith freely. In this long letter, called an *Apology*, Aristedes described what Christians believe and emphasized the integrity with which they lived: “Christians do not lie.

They do not commit adultery or engage in sexual promiscuity and immorality. They do not give false testimony in court, withhold someone’s deposit or envy another person’s possessions. They honor their parents, are helpful to their neighbors and, as judges, make decisions with justice and mercy. Anything they do not want others to do to them, they do not do to others. They willingly share what they have with those in need. The good works they do are not made public to impress others but rather are done unnoticed so that they may hide their deeds as one who finds a treasure

and hides it. Every morning and at all hours they give praise and thanks to God for the gifts they have received. This is the content of the Christian's law and the content of their lives."



St. Athanasios the Great

His memory is celebrated on January 18th

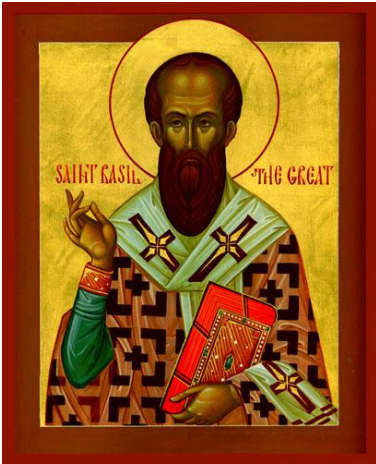
St. Athanasios the Great (290-373 AD) was the fourth century bishop of Alexandria in Egypt whose life and witness are pivotal for the history of the Christian Church. It was he who most fiercely resisted the false teaching of Arius and, as the price to be paid, narrowly escaped death twice and was exiled from Alexandria five times. During these exiles, he spent time among the monks of the Egyptian desert and eventually wrote *The Life of St. Anthony*, so powerfully telling the story of the Father of Monasticism that it was instrumental in the later conversion of St. Augustine of Hippo. Athanasios' book, *On the Incarnation of Christ*, was written to refute Arius' teaching that Christ was not the Word of God made flesh. Athanasios was a powerful preacher and writer. He attended the First Ecumenical Council in 325AD as a young deacon and his influence was foundational to the development of the Nicene Creed, a statement of faith still professed by most Christians to this day. Unafraid, he even defied Roman emperors if he felt it was necessary to do what was good, right and true. He was also an important figure in determining the canon of the New Testament. In a letter written in 367 AD he was the first person to list those 27 books that all Christians today agree constitute the New Testament. In an age of great saints, he dominated the history of the Church in the fourth century like no other figure



St. Argyre the New-Martyr

Her memory is celebrated on April 30th

St. Argyre was born in 1688 AD and was a native of Prusa in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). A very beautiful young woman happily married to a Christian husband, she caught the eye of a Muslim neighbor who began making sexual advances towards her. She refused these advances, honoring her marriage and her faith in Jesus Christ. Her neighbor, angry at being rebuffed, accused Argyre of wanting to convert to Islam. When the Muslim authorities investigated, Argyre flatly denied this and confessed her faith in Christ. Her husband, who was wealthy, was able to get her case moved to Constantinople where he hoped that she would get a fairer trial. This proved not to be the case. Presented to the Muslim authorities in Constantinople, Argyre continued to confess her Christian faith and was beaten and imprisoned. After spending years in prison, having been tortured on numerous occasions, Argyre died at the age of 37 in 1725 AD. After four years her body was exhumed and she was reburied in the Church of St. Paraskeve in Constantinople.



St. Basil the Great

His memory is celebrated on January 1st

The impact of the vigorous personality and thought of St. Basil the Great (329-379AD) dominated the life of the Church in the 4th century in a way that few other figures did. An able ecclesiastical politician who was more than willing to challenge the secular Roman authorities if necessity demanded, a clear sighted dogmatic theologian whose book *On the Holy Spirit* was an important factor in leading to the 2nd Ecumenical Council in 381AD, a liturgical reformer whose *Liturgy of St. Basil* is still celebrated in the Orthodox Church to the present day, an

organizer of social relief on a vast scale in an age when harshness and cruelty often seemed to reign supreme, he was also, first and foremost, a man engaged in living the monastic life. Black-bearded, with heavy eyebrows, glittering eyes, small lips pressed tightly together, Basil stares out from mosaics and icons found in churches in Greece, Constantinople, Mt. Athos, Russia and throughout the Orthodox world. Basil was born into an old Christian family of wealth and distinction in Caesarea of Cappadocia (modern Turkey) and educated in Constantinople and Athens. He had a strong sympathy for the poor and downtrodden. Becoming the bishop of Caesarea in 370AD, he established a large monastic complex, called the *Basilead*, that included a hospital for the sick, a hospice, an orphanage, a special building for the care of lepers, a soup kitchen and so much more that it came to be called a new town, a new Caesarea. Basil the Great – he wears the name well: a man of profound intellect deeply in love with God.

St. Cassiani the Hymnwriter

Her memory is celebrated on September 7th

St. Cassiani was born in 810 AD, the well-educated daughter of an aristocratic family in Constantinople. A candidate to be the wife of the iconoclastic emperor Theophilus (who reigned 830-842 AD), she participated in a “bride show” in 830 AD, from which the emperor was to choose his wife. Theophilus, fixing his eyes on Cassiani, said: “From woman came the worst in the world” (referring to Eve and original sin); to which Cassiani calmly replied, “From woman also came the best” (referring to the Virgin Mary giving birth to Christ). Not wanting a wife that was his intellectual superior, Theophilus chose another woman to be empress. This freed Cassiani to follow her heart’s desire and enter a convent where she could devote her life completely to Christ. She began writing poetic hymns of subtle beauty that earned the praise of another saint and hymnwriter, St. Theodore the Studite, with whom she corresponded. She died in 867 AD. Of her 24 surviving compositions, perhaps the most famous is still sung on Holy Tuesday evening and is simply called, “The Hymn of Cassiani.” This hymn, filled with repentance and love for Christ, is based on the story of the sinful woman who washed and anointed the feet of the Lord Jesus and then dried them with her hair, as recorded in the Gospel of Luke 7:36-50. Within the Greek Orthodox tradition it is considered one of the most beautiful and moving hymns sung in all of Holy Week.



St. Christina the Martyr

Her memory is celebrated on July 24th

St. Christina was born in the coastal city of Tyre in what is today Lebanon. The daughter of a wealthy magistrate named Urban, at the age of eleven her father confined her to a tower to protect her from the world. Although completely isolated from the world outside, Urban provided Christina with servants and a series of tutors to see to her needs. Ultimately, in spite of her isolation, Christina embraced the Christian faith, something that enraged her father so much that he turned her in to the Roman governor, for being a

Christian in the Roman Empire of the third century was illegal, a crime punishable by death. Christina was imprisoned, cruelly tortured and mutilated in an attempt to force her to renounce the Christian faith, yet she courageously refused to do so. When her tongue was cut out, she took it from the hands of her persecutor and threw it in his face. After tremendous suffering, Christina was finally executed. The year was 234AD. Her uncle claimed her body and buried it. Her relics are now in a church in Palermo, Sicily.



St. Christopher the Great Martyr

His memory is celebrated on May 9th

St. Christopher, whose name prior to his baptism was Reprebus, was a member of a fierce North African tribe called the Marmaritae. Referred to as “cannibals” in some ancient historical sources, the Marmaritae were from a region of what we today call Libya. Captured by Roman forces during the Emperor Diocletian’s campaign against the Marmaritae in 302 AD, he was then conscripted to serve in the Roman army at a garrison in Antioch, Syria. St. Peter the Martyr, the early fourth century archbishop of Alexandria and predecessor of St. Athanasios the Great, ransomed some of the prisoners taken captive in this campaign, including

Reprebus. Amazed by this act of generosity, Reprebus was soon baptized and took a new name: Christopher, i.e. “the man who carries Christ.” Confronted about his new found faith, Christopher refused to renounce his commitment to Christ and, after being tortured, was beheaded in 303 AD during the last persecution of Christians under pagan Roman rule. As early as 450 AD, there were churches built in his memory in Bithynia and Chalcedon (modern Turkey). The oldest surviving icon of St. Christopher is found in the ancient monastery of St. Katherine, built at the foot of Mt. Sinai by the Christian emperor Justinian (reigned 527-565 AD). One of the most popular saints in both the Eastern and Western halves of Christendom, St. Christopher became the patron saint of travelers in the Roman Catholic Church.



Sts. Constantine and Helen

Their memory is celebrated on May 21

St. Constantine was born in 272 AD, the son of the Emperor Constantius Chlorus and Helen. After his coronation, Constantine fought against the Roman co-emperor, Maxentius to determine who would be sole ruler of the Empire. Before the battle, a brilliant Cross appeared to him in the sky during the day, completely adorned with stars and written on the Cross were these words: "By this sign you shall conquer." Astonished, the emperor ordered a large cross to be forged similar to the one that appeared to him and that it was to be carried before the army. He achieved a remarkable victory over an enemy who was far superior in members at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in Rome. Shortly afterwards, Constantine issued the famous Edict of Milan in the year 313 AD to halt the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. Constantine built a new capital city on the Bosphorus which from that time on was called Constantinople. When a discord began in the Church because of the false teaching of the Egyptian priest Arius, who denied that Christ was the Word of God made flesh, Constantine convened the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 325 AD, where the heresy was condemned and Orthodoxy confirmed. St. Helen, the mother of the emperor, was very zealous for the Christian faith. She visited Jerusalem, discovered the True Cross of the Lord, and built the Church of the Resurrection on Golgotha and many other churches throughout the Holy Land. St. Helen died in 327 AD at the age of eighty. The emperor Constantine died in the city of Nicomedia in 337 AD at the age of sixty five.



Sts. Cosmas and Damian the Physicians

Their memory is celebrated on November 1st

Sts. Cosmas and Damian were twin brothers born in Arabia who became physicians and being Christians, offered medical treatment freely to everyone, accepting no money in payment for their services. For this reason, they are called in Greek "anagyroi," literally, "without silver" i.e. without money. They were the first medical missionaries, spreading the Gospel not merely by preaching and teaching, but also by their compassion for everyone, especially the poor, expressed concretely in their medical practice. Living in the city of Aegea in Cilicia (modern Turkey), the two brothers acquired a growing reputation for excellence both in their practice of medicine and the compassion with which they dealt with people. During the persecution initiated by the Roman emperor Diocletian, they were arrested on the orders of Lysias, the Roman governor of Cilicia. They were tortured, but refused to renounce their faith in Christ Jesus. They were executed by being beheaded in 303 AD and their three brothers – Anthimos, Leontios and Euprepios – were executed with them. In Constantinople, more than 250 years later, the Christian emperor Justinian built and dedicated a Church in their honor; at about the same time, in Rome, Pope Felix IV erected a Church near the Forum of Vespasian in their honor that still stands today and contains beautiful sixth century mosaics.



St. Demetrios the Great Martyr

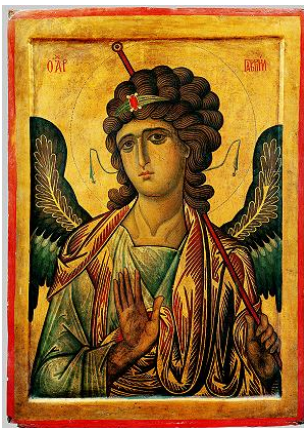
His memory is celebrated on October 26th

St. Demetrios was the son of Christian parents, a well-educated Roman military commander and a Christian in secret who refused to follow the orders of the Roman emperor Galerius (who ruled 286-305 AD) to begin rounding up, arresting and executing the Christians of the city of Thessaloniki in Greece. For his insubordination, Demetrios was arrested, tortured and eventually executed by the emperor's personal guards in 304 AD. Today, the largest and one of the most ancient churches in Greece, the Cathedral of St. Demetrios, is built over the sight of his burial place and houses his relics. It was in 312 AD that for the first time, a small house church was built over the tomb of St. Demetrios to mark the spot where the man who, over the centuries, has become the patron saint of the city of Thessaloniki, was buried.

St. Efthymia the Martyr

Her memory is celebrated on September 1st

St. Efthymia was one of forty women executed for her Christian faith together with Ammoun the Deacon, who was their teacher and guide, in 303 AD. Arrested in the city of Adrianople in Macedonia (modern Greece), Deacon Ammoun, St. Efthymia and the other women were tried by the local Roman governor, Babdos, who ordered them all to be tortured to see if they would renounce their faith in Christ Jesus. None of them did. Following their refusal, they were ordered to be executed for the capital crime of professing Christianity. As a Roman citizen, Ammoun was beheaded, as were eight of the women, including St. Efthymia. The rest were burned alive or put to the sword during this final bloody persecution of Christians in the history of the Roman Empire.



The Archangel Gabriel

His memory is celebrated on November 8th

Gabriel, whose name in Hebrew means “God is mighty,” is one of the archangels mentioned in the Scriptures on numerous occasions, beginning in the Old Testament. In chapters eight and nine of the Book of Daniel, it is the archangel Gabriel who is sent by God to interpret the visions seen by the prophet Daniel. In the New Testament, it is the archangel Gabriel who announces two of the most pivotal events in the history of the human race. In Luke's Gospel, the archangel Gabriel announces the birth of John the Baptist to his father Zechariah while he was serving as a priest in the Temple in Jerusalem. When Zechariah, frightened by his vision of the archangel Gabriel, asks how this can be so since he and his wife are too old to have children, the archangel responds by saying, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God.” And it is the archangel Gabriel who is sent to Nazareth in Galilee to announce to the Virgin Mary that she will give birth to the Lord Jesus whom he calls “the Son of the Most High God” and a “king of the descendants of Jacob” whose “kingdom will never end,” this latter phrase being incorporated into the Nicene Creed recited by Orthodox Christians at the celebration of every Liturgy to this day. Together with the archangel

Michael and all the ranks of the angels, the archangel Gabriel is celebrated in the life of the Church on November 8th.



St. George the Great Martyr

His memory is celebrated on April 23rd

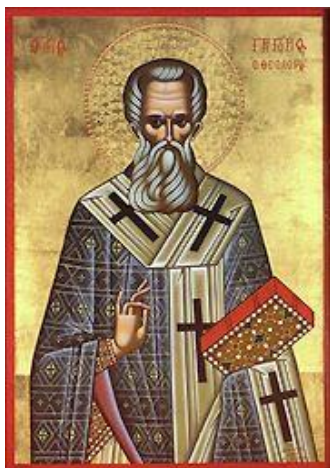
St. George was born in the ancient Roman province of Cappadocia, in what is today part of Turkey, the son of Christian parents. George's father was executed for being a Christian while George was still a child, so he had seen with his own eyes the brutality of the Roman Empire in its persecution of Christians. His mother, owning some land in Palestine, moved there and George was raised as a believer. As a young man, George entered the Roman army where, after distinguishing himself in service, he came to the notice of the emperor Diocletian (who reigned from 284-305 AD) and was promoted and made a member of the imperial guard. After a meeting of the Roman senate in Nicomedia, at which Diocletian gained their full support in his ongoing persecution of Christians, George distributed all of his goods to the poor, freed his slaves and then appeared before the senate to denounce their decision. He confessed himself to be a Christian, saying, "I am a servant of Christ my God and trusting in Him, I have come before you voluntarily to bear witness to the Truth." George was arrested and then tortured. On the day of his martyrdom, George asked God to forgive all those who had tortured him. George was executed for his faith in Christ by being beheaded in 303 AD.



St. Gerasimos of Kephallonia

His memory is celebrated on October 20th

St Gerasimos was born in Trikala, in 16th century Greece. As a young adult, he became a monk on the island of Zakynthos. On Mt. Athos he advanced still further in the practice of the monastic life and studied with the ascetics there. He then went to Jerusalem to worship at the Church of the Holy Tomb of the Savior. After visiting many holy places in Jerusalem, Mount Sinai, Antioch, Damascus, Alexandria and throughout Egypt, he returned to Jerusalem where he became a lamp-lighter at the Tomb of the Lord. St. Gerasimos was ordained a deacon and then a priest by Patriarch Germanos of Jerusalem. Having received the Patriarch's blessing for a life of silence, St Gerasimos withdrew to Zakynthos in solitude, eating only vegetables. After five years he was inspired to go the island of Kephallonia, where he lived initially as a hermit in a cave. He restored a church in the town of Omala, and he founded a women's monastery where he lived in constant toil and vigil for thirty years. He prayed on bent knees stretched out on the ground. For his humble and prayerful life, God granted him the miraculous gift of being able to heal the sick and cast out unclean spirits. St Gerasimos died in 1579 AD. Two years later, his grave was opened and his holy relics were found fragrant and incorrupt and filled with a healing power that can only come from the one, true and living God.

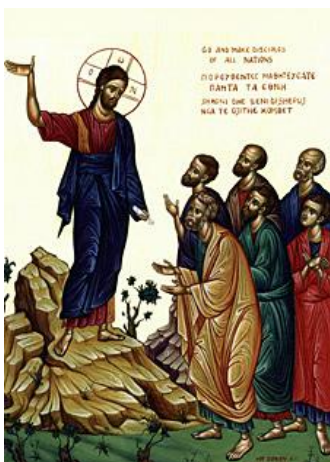


St. Gregory the Theologian

His memory is celebrated on January 25th and 30th

St. Gregory the Theologian – together with his lifelong friend St. Basil the Great and St. John Chrysostom – is celebrated as one of the three greatest teachers and preachers of the Christian faith in the history of the Church. He is also one of only three individuals – together with St. John, the author of the fourth Gospel, and St. Symeon the New Theologian – who bear the title "the Theologian" in the Orthodox Church. The son of Gregory, the 4th century Bishop of Nazianzus in Cappadocia (modern Turkey), and his wife Nonna – both of whom are also remembered as saints – the young Gregory

was educated in Caesarea, Alexandria and Athens. He taught rhetoric in Athens before returning to Asia Minor where he lived for a time as a monk in the hermitages of Pontus with St. Basil. It was during this period that he and Basil composed the first *Philokalia*, a collection of the sayings of Origen, the third century Alexandrian teacher, about prayer and the disciplines of the spiritual life. He was ordained as a priest by his father and ultimately a bishop by St. Basil. As the patriarch of Constantinople, he was a staunch advocate of Trinitarian theology, insisting that the Lord Jesus was indeed the Word of God made flesh. A pivotal figure in the life of the Church, he presided over the Second Ecumenical Council in 381AD that proclaimed the divinity of the Holy Spirit and composed a brief summary of the Christian faith that we today call the Nicene Creed.



The Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ

This event is remembered and celebrated at every baptism

The Gospel of Matthew records that the Lord Jesus, after His resurrection from the dead, met with the eleven disciples on a hillside in Galilee and commanded them to “Go to the peoples of all nations and make them My disciples, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” The Risen Christ makes it clear that the Church is to have a worldwide mission to bring the Good News of His life, teaching, crucifixion and resurrection from the dead to everyone, without exception. The sharing of this Good News

with all of humanity is not something peripheral to the life of the Church; it is the essence of the Church’s life, work and ministry. The Church must share with everyone the knowledge and experience of salvation that we have joyfully received as a gift of God’s love for the human race. It is precisely in the context of this commandment to share the Good News that the Lord Jesus makes a promise to His disciples: “I will be with you always, even to the end of the age.” As Archbishop Anastasios Yiannoulatos of Albania, perhaps the greatest missionary in the Orthodox Church of the 20th century has said: “Mission is a basic element in the DNA of the Church.”



St. Hannah the Prophetess

Her memory is celebrated on December 9th

St. Hannah was the mother of the Old Testament prophet Samuel and, in the life of the Church, she also bears the title of “prophetess.” Living in the 11th century BC in the town of Ramah in the hill country of Ephraim, she grieved at being childless and her husband, Elkhanah, was unable to console her. Elkanah’s second wife, Peninah, by whom he had children, would often taunt Hannah about her childlessness, leaving her in despair.

When the family went on their annual pilgrimage to worship and offer sacrifices to God at Shiloh, Hannah, in tears, prayed that God would give her children. She promised the Lord that if He gave her a son, she would dedicate him to His service. Eli, the priest of Shiloh, assured Hannah that the Lord had heard her heartfelt prayers and that she would be given children. Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son whom she named Samuel, a name that means “the Lord has heard my prayer.” True to her word, Hannah returned to Shiloh and dedicated her son to the Lord. Samuel grew up serving Eli the priest at the shrine at Shiloh until the Lord called him to be a prophet to the people of Israel. Each year, Hannah made a pilgrimage to the shrine at Shiloh and she would bring Samuel a little robe that she had made for him. In addition to the prophet Samuel, Hannah was blessed by God with three more sons and two daughters.



St. Herman of Alaska

His memory is celebrated on December 13th

Saint Herman was born near Moscow in 1756. In his youth he became a monk, first at the Saint Sergius Hermitage near Saint Petersburg; while he dwelt there, the most holy Mother of God appeared to him, healing him of a grave malady. Afterwards he entered Valaam Monastery where he often withdrew into the wilderness to pray for days at a time. In 1794, answering a call for missionaries to preach the Gospel to the Aleuts, he came to the New World with the first Orthodox mission to Alaska. He settled on Spruce Island, which he called New Valaam, and here he persevered, even

in the face of many grievous afflictions mostly at the hands of his own countrymen in the loving service of God and of his neighbor. Besides his many toils for the sake of the Aleuts, he subdued his flesh with great asceticism, wearing chains, sleeping little, fasting and praying much. He brought many people to Christ by the example of his life, his teaching, his kindness and his sanctity, and was granted the grace of working miracles and possessed prophetic insight. Saint Herman used holy water to heal the sick. Because of his missionary labors, he is called the Enlightener of the Aleuts, and has likewise been renowned as miracle-worker and healer since his falling asleep in the Lord in 1837. In 1970 he became the first formally canonized saint of the Orthodox Church in America.



St. Irene of Chrysovalantou

Her memory is celebrated on July 28th

St. Irene of Chrysovalantou was the daughter of an aristocratic and deeply religious Cappadocian family. When the Empress Theodora (reigned 842-855 AD), the woman who restored the use of icons to the Church, desired a bride for her son, the prince Michael, women were gathered from all over the Empire, including the young Irene. But, upon her arrival in Constantinople, Irene discovered that prince Michael had married someone else only a few days before.

This left her free to pursue her heart's desire: the monastic life. Irene entered the Monastery of Chrysovalantou and soon became known for the depth of her prayer, humility and compassion for others. When the abbess of Chrysovalantou died, Irene was chosen to be the new abbess by St. Methodios, the patriarch of Constantinople, who also ordained her as a deaconess. A woman who saw visions of her fellow countryman from Cappadocia, the 4th century bishop St. Basil the Great, she also developed prophetic insight and soon became known throughout the city for her holiness of life. She lived to be 101 years old. Following her death, miracles of healing were attributed to her by those who came to visit her gravesite. Today, in New York, there is a weeping icon of St. Irene Chrysovalantou at the Greek Orthodox Monastery that bears her name in Astoria, Long Island.

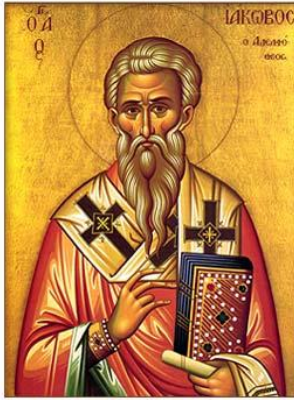


The Prophet Isaiah

His memory is celebrated on May 9th

The prophet Isaiah lived in the 8th century BC. His name, Isaiah, literally means, "God is salvation." Married and with two sons, Isaiah had a vision of the glory of the Lord while serving as a priest in the Temple, a vision calling him to be a prophet, speaking the Word of the Lord to the rulers and people of Judah. Living under the military threat of the Assyrian empire, Isaiah saw the northern kingdom of Israel fall. He constantly called the people of Judah back to the Lord, exposing their sins and warning of God's impending judgment if they failed to repent and change how they lived. It is in the

book of Isaiah, one of the longest books in the Old Testament, that Christians see prophecies of the coming Messiah (or Christ) and His kingdom. The prophet Isaiah speaks of the sign of the virgin's womb; how He would be called the prince of peace and be a suffering servant, despised and rejected, a man of sorrows, like a sheep led to the slaughter. The book of Isaiah is the Old Testament book most often quoted in the New Testament. Because he prophesied the coming of Christ so wonderfully, Isaiah has sometimes been called the evangelical or gospel prophet.



St. Iakovos, the Brother of God

His memory is celebrated on October 23rd

The holy Apostle James, the Brother of God, was the son of the Righteous Joseph the Betrothed by a previous marriage. From his early years James was a Nazarene, a man especially dedicated to God. The Nazarenes vowed to preserve their virginity, to abstain from wine, to refrain from eating meat, and never to cut their hair. Within Judaism, the Nazarenes symbolized a life of holiness and purity. When the Lord Jesus began to preach and teach the Kingdom of God, James believed in Him as the Christ and became one of His disciples. He was eventually chosen as the first Bishop of Jerusalem. St. James presided over the Council of Jerusalem and his word was decisive (Acts 15). In his thirty years as bishop, St. James converted many of the Jewish people to Christianity. Annoyed by this, the Pharisees and the Scribes led the saint up on the pinnacle of the Jerusalem Temple and asked what he thought of Jesus. The holy Apostle began to bear witness that Christ is the Messiah. Angered, the Jewish teachers threw him off the roof. The saint did not die immediately but prayed to the Lord for his enemies while they were stoning him. St. James' martyrdom occurred about 63 AD. The ancient Liturgy of the church in Jerusalem, the Liturgy of St. James, which formed the basis of the Liturgies of Sts. Basil the Great and John Chrysostom, is still celebrated in the Orthodox Church to this day on October 23rd and the Sunday after Christmas. The Church has also preserved the *Letter of St. James*, one of the books of the New Testament.



St. James the son of Zebedee

His memory is celebrated on April 30th

St. James, the son of Zebedee, was the brother of St. John the Evangelist and Theologian, and he was called by our Lord Jesus Christ to become one of the Twelve Apostles. It was to Saints John, James and Peter that Jesus Christ revealed His Mysteries: at the raising of the daughter of Jairus, on Mount Tabor at His Transfiguration, and in the Garden of Gethsemane. St. James, after the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, preached in Spain and in other lands, and then he returned to Jerusalem. He openly and boldly preached Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world, and he denounced the Pharisees and the Scribes with the words of Holy Scripture, reproaching them for their malice of heart and unbelief. The Jews persuaded Herod Agrippa (40-44) to arrest the Apostle James and sentence him to death. One of the false witnesses brought forward to accuse St. James, whose name was Josiah, was struck by his courage in the face of certain death. He came to believe in the truth about the Lord Jesus as the Messiah. When James was led out to be executed, Josiah fell at his feet, repenting of his sin and asking forgiveness. The apostle embraced him, gave him a kiss and said, "Peace and forgiveness to you." Then Josiah confessed faith in Christ before everyone, and was executed together with St. James in the year 44 AD in Jerusalem.

St. John the Baptist

His memory is celebrated on January 7th, June 24th and August 29th



Born in the hill country of Judea, John the Baptist was the son of elderly parents: Zechariah, a priest of the Temple in Jerusalem and Elizabeth, a daughter of a priestly family and as well as a relative of Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus. The birth of his son had been announced to Zechariah by the Archangel Gabriel while he was serving as a priest in the Temple in Jerusalem by attending the altar of incense. This vision of the Archangel Gabriel was so powerful that Zechariah was struck dumb until after the birth of his son. At the circumcision of his newborn son, Zechariah named him John and in a song of praise to God predicted that John would become a prophet of God. John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus were born within six months of one another in towns within sight of each other. Mary and Joseph had come to Bethlehem for the census; the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth was below Mount Orah in Ein Karem, the “Gracious Spring.” It was in the year 28 AD that John began his public ministry as a prophet, preacher of repentance and teacher, emerging from the desert as a fierce ascetic, eating only locusts and wild honey and clothed in rough camel skins. John preached a baptism of repentance in the Jordan River for the forgiveness of sins as a way of preparing for the coming of the Christ (or Messiah). John gained many followers, including some – like Andrew, Peter's brother – who were later to become disciples of the Lord Jesus. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all see the ministry of John the Baptist as the fulfillment of the ancient prophecy of Isaiah about the coming of one of God's prophets and messengers who would be like a voice crying in the wilderness, preparing the way for the coming of the Lord. And indeed, in the tradition of the Church, John the Baptist is known as the forerunner of Christ, the friend of the Bridegroom. Thrown into prison because of his criticism of King Herod Antipas' marriage to Herodias, who had been his brother Philip's wife, John was eventually beheaded by Herod in fulfillment of a promise he made to Salome, her daughter. In the Church we celebrate both the birth and death of John the Baptist: his birth on June 24th; and his beheading at the order of the king, Herod Antipas, on August 29th.



St. John Chrysostom

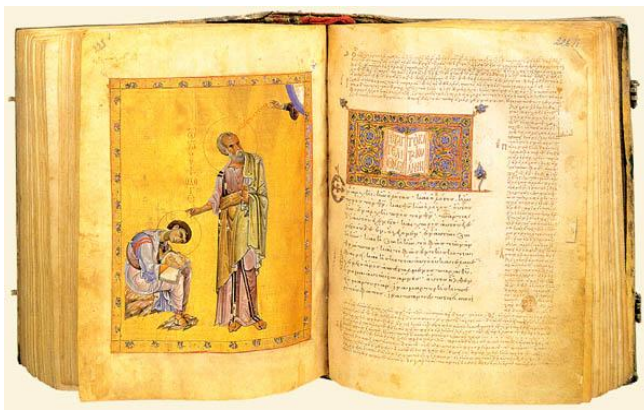
His memory is celebrated on November 13th

St. John Chrysostom (347-407AD), Archbishop of Constantinople, was a bishop and preacher from the fourth and fifth centuries in the cities of Antioch and Constantinople. The Liturgy that bears his name is, to this day, the normal Sunday worship of the Orthodox Church. He is famous for eloquence in public speaking and his denunciation of abuse of authority in the Church and in the Roman Empire of his time. He was an ascetic and, for a time, lived as a monk. He gained considerable fame for his insightful expositions of the Scriptures and his moral teaching. Among the most valuable of his works are his *Homilies* on various books of the Bible. His straightforward understanding of the

Scriptures meant that the themes of his talks were eminently social, explaining the Christian's conduct in life. He particularly emphasized almsgiving and was most concerned with the spiritual and temporal needs of the poor. He spoke out against the abuse of wealth and personal property, something which ultimately led to his exile by the Roman empress Eudoxia. After his death he was named Chrysostom, which comes from the Greek Χρυσόστομος, meaning "golden-mouthed." He is also recognized as a saint by the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England, both of whom commemorate him on September 13. His relics were stolen from Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204 and brought to Rome, but were returned to the Church of Constantinople on November 27, 2004, by Pope John Paul II.

St. John the Evangelist and Theologian

His memory is celebrated on May 8th, June 30th and September 26th



John was a Galilean fisherman who, together with his brother James, were partners with two other brothers who also became disciples of the Lord Jesus, Peter and Andrew. John and James were the sons of Zebedee and were called by the Lord Jesus to follow Him while they were mending their fishing nets. The Gospel of Mark records their response: "Immediately, they left everything and followed Him." John

and his brother James, together with Peter, formed an inner circle among the disciples and were privileged to witness the transfiguration of Christ on Mt. Tabor as well as be with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane just before His crucifixion. It is John whom the Scriptures describe as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" and to whom He entrusted the care of His mother while hanging on the Cross. It is John who ran before Peter to the tomb on the morning of the resurrection and seeing it empty, believed. John was the only one of the Twelve not to end his long life in martyrdom, although he was exiled to the island of Patmos, then a Roman penal colony, for being a Christian. In the New Testament, John is traditionally considered to be the author of the fourth Gospel, three letters and the Book of Revelation. After being released from exile he settled in Ephesus, where he presided over the local church until he died. He often delivered the same short sermon: "Brothers and sisters, love one another." When asked by members of his congregation if they couldn't, sometime, hear a different message, he is said to have replied, "When you have mastered this lesson, we can move on to another."



St. John of the Ladder

His memory is celebrated on March 30th and the fourth Sunday of Lent

John of the Ladder was the 7th century abbot of the ancient monastery of St. Katherine at the foot of Mt. Sinai in the Egyptian desert. Although we do not know where John was born, we know that he entered the monastery of St. Katherine when he was only 16 years old and remained there for the rest of his life as a monk and spiritual father, devoting himself entirely to Christ. In his later years, John wrote a book on living the Christian life called *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* which is still read to this day. In this book, John describes the Christian life as a ladder of ascent with

thirty rungs, starting at the bottom rung with renunciation of passions such as greed, anger, arrogance, lust for power and lying and climbing up the ladder towards God through repentance, humility, meekness, simplicity and wisdom to the 30th and highest rung, love for both God and neighbor, in fulfillment of Christ's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. For John, as for the apostle Paul before him, a Christian "remembers Jesus with each breath" and "is an imitator of Christ in thought, word and deed as far as this is humanly possible and believes rightly and blamelessly in the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit."



St. Katherine the Great Martyr

Her memory is celebrated on November 25th

St. Katherine was the daughter of a high-ranking Roman patrician named Constus. Raised in a privileged household, Katherine was a well-educated, learned and beautiful young woman who lived in fourth century Alexandria, in Egypt, and was executed for her faith in Christ in 305 AD during the reign of the emperor Maximian (305-315 AD). Through her studies of philosophy she became convinced of the truth of Christianity and became a Christian at an early age and at time when it was still illegal to be a Christian in the Roman Empire. Maximian, on an official visit to the city of Alexandria, ordered the execution of those Christians in prison as part of the gladiatorial games celebrating his visit. When Katherine protested this and disclosed that she was a Christian, Maximian ordered her to be arrested. While in her prison cell, Katherine had a vision of Christ that comforted and strengthened her resolve. She was then given the opportunity to debate 50 philosophers representing a variety of classical Greek and Roman philosophical and religious points of view. Brilliantly demolishing their arguments, her success in defending Christianity in debate angered Maximian who then had Katherine tortured on a spiked wheel and eventually beheaded. Her relics are today in the monastery that bears her name at the foot of Mt. Sinai in Egypt.

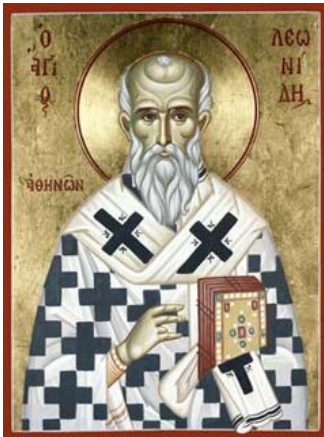


St. Kyriakos the Monk

His memory is celebrated on September 29th

St. Kyriakos was born in the city of Corinth, in Greece, sometime in the middle of the 5th century. The son of a priest named John and a deeply religious mother, Eudokia, Kyriakos' uncle was Peter, the bishop of Corinth. Raised in the life of the Church, his biographers say that it was his constant reading of the Scriptures that nurtured his love for Christ and his desire to live a truly holy life. At eighteen, during a service in Church, he was deeply moved by the Lord's command in Matthew's Gospel: "If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself,

take up his cross and follow Me." Believing these words applied to him, he left Greece for Jerusalem, where he visited all the holy places associated with the Lord and took up the monastic life. There he learned the monastic life of prayer and silence from three great saints: Euthymios the Great, Gerasimos of the Jordan River and Chariton of the Monastery of Souka. St. Kyriakos is described as having been a large and powerful man who was well-known as an ascetic and a miracle-working healer even during his own lifetime. Animals flocked to him because of his gentleness of soul and it is said that he had a huge lion as a companion during the last years of his life. He died in the year 557AD, having lived to be more than a hundred years old.



St. Leonidas of Athens

His memory is celebrated on April 15th

St. Leonidas was the bishop of Athens in the middle of the third century AD. Arrested shortly after celebrating Pascha in the spring of 250 AD during the persecution of Christians carried out at the orders of the Roman emperor Decius, Leonidas and a group of women who had been arrested with him were transferred to Corinth, the governmental seat for the Roman province of Achaia, where they were tried by the Roman proconsul Benoustos. Refusing to renounce his faith in Christ, Leonidas and the seven women with him – Charissa, Galina, Nike, Kalisa, Nunekhia, Basilissa and Theodora – were

found guilty of the crime of Christianity, the punishment for which was execution. After being beaten and then tortured, they were executed by having large stones tied around their necks, taken out to sea on the Gulf of Corinth and then thrown overboard to drown.



St. Luke the Evangelist

His memory celebrated on October 18th

St. Luke the Evangelist was a close friend and travel companion of the apostle Paul on his second and third great missionary journeys throughout the Mediterranean world, a Gentile probably born in the city of Antioch, and a medical doctor by profession. He is also the author of two

books in the New Testament: the Gospel that bears his name and the Acts of the Apostles. Imprisoned in Rome, near the end of his life, the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy that “Luke is my only companion.” Luke’s Gospel places the story of the Lord Jesus in the context of Roman history and, as he says in the opening verses, is an attempt to “provide an orderly account” of the story of the Lord Jesus by consulting “eyewitnesses” to the events he describes for a man named Theophilus. His Gospel is marked by his special concern for the poor, the marginalized and social outcasts, as well as for the universality of the Good News about Jesus Christ for all peoples, both Jews and Gentiles alike. Luke also emphasizes the activity of the Holy Spirit, who is active both in the life of Christ and in the earliest Christian communities as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, beginning with the day of Pentecost. Luke is also known in the Christian tradition as one of the first painters of icons and was martyred at the age of 84 near Thebes, Greece.

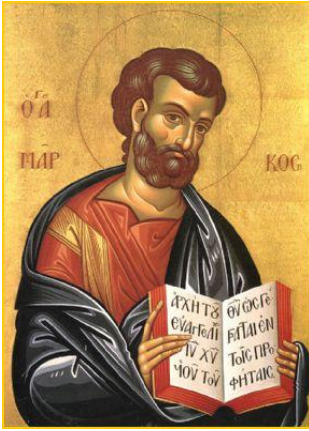


St. Marina the Martyr

Her memory is celebrated on July 17th

St. Marina was born in Asia Minor (modern Turkey), then a province of the Roman Empire, in the city of Antioch of Pisidia. Her father was a pagan priest. Marina’s mother died while she was still an infant and her father gave her into the care of a nursemaid (or nanny as we would probably say today) who was a Christian and who raised Marina as a Christian. When her father eventually discovered that his daughter was a Christian, he disowned her. During the persecution of Christians that took place under the Roman emperor Diocletian (who ruled 284-305AD), Marina was

arrested and thrown into prison. She was 15 years old. Her judge, the provincial governor Olymbrios was willing to let her go if she became one of his wives, but she refused. In response, he had her brutally tortured and then beheaded. The relics of St. Marina are today in a church in Athens named after this faithful witness (or martyr, to use the Greek word) of Christ.

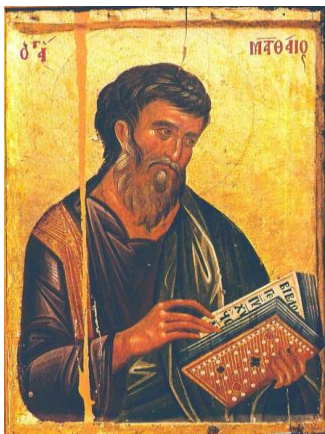


St. Mark the Evangelist

His memory is celebrated on April 25th

St. Mark is mentioned some ten times in the New Testament. The Book of Acts tells us that he accompanied the apostles Paul and Barnabas (his older cousin) on their first missionary journey, but did not complete the journey and turned back alone at Perga. Paul later refused to take Mark with him on his second missionary journey. Instead, Mark went with Barnabas to continue the evangelization of the island of Cyprus. This breach with Paul was eventually healed and Mark was with him in Rome at the time of his execution. Mark is most famous for

writing the Gospel that bears his name, an account of the life, teaching, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Probably written in Rome shortly after the execution of the apostles Peter and Paul, it was a vivid reminder to Christians, then suffering persecution for their faith, of the sufferings of Christ, their Master, and an inspiration to them to remain faithful to Him. Mark's Gospel is the first and oldest of the four gospels that today constitute the heart of the New Testament and, in fact, forms the essential basis for the Gospels of Matthew and Luke as well. Of the 660 verses in Mark's Gospel, 600 are to be found in Matthew's Gospel and 350 in Luke's Gospel and only 60 in neither. Compared to these two later Gospels, Mark's is much shorter, more direct and informal and written in the simple Greek used throughout the Mediterranean world of his time. Traditionally, the writing of Mark's Gospel has been associated with the witness of the apostle Peter and rooted in Mark's relationship with him. At the closing of the *First Letter of Peter* the apostle speaks of "my son Mark" much as the apostle Paul wrote of Timothy in his letters. St. Irenaeus of Lyons, around 185AD, wrote that "after the deaths of Peter and Paul, Mark – the disciple and interpreter of Peter – handed down to us in writing those things that Peter had proclaimed." The fourth century church historian Eusebius mentions that after leaving Rome, Mark went to the city of Alexandria in Egypt and became its first bishop. Like the apostles Peter and Paul, Mark was also to be executed for his Christian faith during the persecution of the emperor Trajan. Following the expansion of Islam into formerly Christian territories, his relics were eventually smuggled out of Alexandria and taken to Venice, where his body lies beneath the altar of St. Mark's Cathedral.



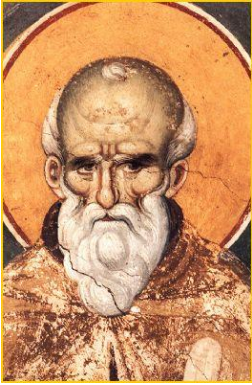
St. Matthew the Evangelist

His memory is celebrated on November 16th

Matthew, who was also named Levi, was from the Galilean city of Capernaum and was a tax-collector for Rome, at a time when Roman rule in Palestine was particularly harsh and often brutal. Tax-collectors, or publicans (from the Latin *publicani*, a word that referred to people collecting taxes for the Roman state), were viewed as collaborators with an oppressive regime and hated by the Jewish people. Called by the Lord Jesus to be His disciple while he was collecting taxes, the Scriptures record that Matthew renounced his position as a tax-collector, left everything and followed Him, becoming one of the Twelve

Apostles and accompanying Christ throughout His ministry. Matthew, as one of the Twelve, was a witness to the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Christ and it is

these events that are at the heart of his Gospel, written sometime in the early 70's of the first century. But Matthew also devotes a considerable portion of his Gospel to the teaching of Jesus. It is, for example, in Matthew's Gospel that the Sermon on the Mount is recorded, containing the Beatitudes, the Golden Rule and the Lord's Prayer. Matthew presents the Lord Jesus and His teaching as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah and the Church as the fulfillment of Israel. Preaching the Gospel in Syria and among peoples of many other nations over the course of his lifetime, Matthew ended his life as a martyr in Ethiopia.



St. Maximos the Confessor

His memory is celebrated on January 21st

St. Maximos the Confessor was born into a wealthy, aristocratic family in Constantinople (modern Istanbul, Turkey) in 580AD. He was appointed chief secretary to the Byzantine emperor Heraclius but soon resigned, abandoning his career and deciding to devote himself entirely to God by becoming a monk. Elected abbot of his monastery at Chrysopolis, his monastery was destroyed by the Persian army as it advanced through Asia Minor. Maximos fled first to Alexandria in Egypt, then Carthage and finally, Rome. A brilliant theologian, ascetic and mystic, Maximos soon found himself embroiled in a controversy with the Byzantine emperor Constans II, who espoused the idea that the Lord Jesus, in the Incarnation, did not have a human will, but only a divine will and therefore was not fully human. For opposing this teaching, the “Christian” emperor ordered Maximos arrested and tortured. For his refusal to submit, he was sentenced to having his tongue cut out and his right hand cut off. He was 82 years old when this was done to him and he died in exile shortly thereafter in 662AD. When the 6th Ecumenical Council was convened in 681AD, *monotheletism* – as the emperor’s teaching had come to be called – was condemned as a heresy and St. Maximos the Confessor was acknowledged as a teacher of Orthodoxy who had suffered for the truth of the faith.



The Prophet Moses

His memory is celebrated on September 4th

Moses was the liberator of the Jewish people from their slavery in Egypt, their religious leader, prophet and lawgiver, the promulgator of the 10 commandments. One of the greatest of all biblical figures, his life is foundational and the establishment of the people of Israel is unthinkable without him. Moses’ role in the story of the Exodus is rooted in his unique and privileged relationship with God. As the book of Exodus records, “The Lord used to speak to Moses face-to-face as a man speaks to his friend.” Speaking to him from the midst of the burning bush, the bush “that burned but was not consumed,” God commanded Moses to lead the people of Israel out of their bondage to the pharaoh of Egypt. His brother Aaron was to accompany him in this task and was later to become the high priest of ancient Israel. Following God’s lead, Moses led the people of Israel not only out of Egypt but for forty years more as they wandered through the desert wilderness on their way to the Promised Land of Canaan. And it is Moses who climbs Mt. Sinai and is entrusted by God to give the Ten Commandments to the people of Israel as the

foundation for their life together as His chosen people. According to the last verses of the book of Deuteronomy, Moses lived long enough only to look over the Promised Land from the heights of Mt. Nebo, where he died at the age of 120, more than a thousand years before the coming of Christ, his mission in God's eyes having been accomplished.



St. Natalie of Nicomedia

Her memory is celebrated on August 26th

St. Natalie, or Natalia, was born near the end of the third century AD and was the wife of Adrian, a Herculian Guard of the Roman emperor Maximian. She and her husband were Roman aristocrats from among some of the wealthiest families of Nicomedia, a city in Asia Minor, about 60 miles south of modern Istanbul. Although Adrian was not yet a Christian, his wife was, secretly. Ordered to begin rounding up Christians for persecution by the emperor in 303 AD, it is said that while Adrian was presiding over the torture of a group of Christian prisoners, he was so impressed by their courage under torture that he asked them what reward they hoped to receive from their God. Quoting St. Paul's *First Letter to the Corinthians* that "eye has not seen nor ear heard nor has it entered into the heart of man those things that God has prepared for those who love Him," they explained their hope in the Lord and His mercy. Adrian was so captivated by their witness to the Gospel that he converted to Christianity and was himself arrested. While in prison together with other Christians, Natalie visited her husband, bringing him food and encouraging him in his newfound faith. Ultimately, Adrian died in Natalie's arms as a result of the torture he underwent. At his death, Natalie and Adrian had been married only thirteen months. Natalie chose to bury her husband near the city of Constantinople, along with 23 other Christians who had perished for their faith. Several days after laying her husband to rest, Natalie had a dream in which Adrian appeared to her and called her to come to God and be with him forever. She died peacefully a few days later.



St. Nektarios of Pentapolis

His memory is celebrated on November 9th

In 1961 the Ecumenical Patriarchate issued an encyclical proclaiming Nektarios Kephalas, the metropolitan of Pentapolis and founder of the Holy Trinity Convent on the island of Aegina, to be a saint. Shortly after this official proclamation, St. Nektarios became widely known throughout Greece and the entire world for the depth and quality of his Christian witness and the many miraculous healings that took place as a result of his prayers both during his lifetime and, especially, after his death. St. Nektarios was born in 1846 in Thrace, Greece and given the name Anastasios by his parents. He was tonsured a monk at the New Monastery on the island of Chios in 1875. When he was ordained as a deacon two years later, he was given the name Nektarios by Metropolitan Gregory of Chios. In 1889, Nektarios was made Metropolitan of Pentapolis by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronios. Falsely accused of impropriety by other clergy jealous of Nektarios' obvious holiness of life, Sophronios had him removed from office in 1890. In 1894 he was appointed the director of the Rizarios Ecclesiastical School in Athens, a post he held until 1908. He then established the Holy Trinity Convent on the island of Aegina, only a short boat ride from Athens. Following a brief illness, St. Nektarios died in a hospital in Athens

on November 8, 1920. Healings began to occur almost immediately as people began asking for his intercession. His relics are today housed on the island of Aegina, a popular site of pilgrimage for Orthodox Christians from all over the world.



St. Nicholas of Myra

His memory is celebrated on December 6th

St. Nicholas, the son of Christian parents, was the early fourth century archbishop of Myra in Lycia, a province of the Roman Empire that is today in the modern state of Turkey. He is the patron saint of Greece and Russia, as well as many classes of people, including children, sailors and prostitutes. Thousands of churches are named after him and his feast day is a time of celebration in many parts of the globe. Imprisoned for being a Christian during the persecution of the emperor Diocletian (284-305 AD), Nicholas lived long enough to see Christianity vindicated in 313 AD when Constantine granted Christianity legal status as a religion in the Roman Empire. He attended the First Ecumenical Council, convened by Constantine, in 325 AD. Known for his compassion for everyone, St. Nicholas is praised in the liturgical life of the Church for his possession of the “fruit of the Spirit” as written in St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” He proclaimed the Word of God with clarity and conviction, exposed the sins of those who were evil, defended the rights of the oppressed and afflicted and battled against every form of injustice. In a word, he was a good pastor, father and bishop to his flock, known especially for his love and care for the poor. One of the more famous stories about him was his saving of three poverty-stricken young girls from lives of prostitution by providing for their dowries. Most simply put, he was a truly good person. In 1087 AD, Italian merchants stole the relics of St. Nicholas from Myra and enshrined them in Bari, Italy where they remain today.



St. Olga of Kiev

Her memory is celebrated on July 11th

St. Olga of Kiev, honored in the memory of the Church as Equal-to-the-Apostles, was born in the city of Pskov, in 879 AD, a descendant of Vikings. The wife of Prince Igor of Kiev, she became the first recorded female ruler of Russia following the assassination of her husband in 945 AD. Ruling for more than 20 years as regent until her son Svyatoslav could assume power, Olga became the first of the Kievan royal family to convert to Christianity. She was baptized in Constantinople, probably in 957 AD, and given the name Helena by her sponsor, the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitos. When she returned to her homeland following her baptism she tried to introduce Christianity on a wide scale but her efforts were resisted by her son Svyatoslav and other nobles who remained outside the faith. Olga died in 969 AD and her son, although an enemy of Christianity, allowed his mother to have a Christian burial. It was Olga’s grandson, Vladimir (who died in 1015 AD), who ultimately led the people of ancient Rus’ to Christianity. And her grandsons, Sts. Boris and Gleb, are remembered in Russian history

for their non-violent resistance to evil, even to the point of sacrificing their lives rather than engaging in a bloody civil war with their brother. St. Olga and her family mark the transition between pagan and Christian Russia and the faith that she worked so hard to plant took root after her lifetime and is still bearing fruit to this day.



St. Paraschiva of Iasi, Romania

Her memory is celebrated on October 14th

This saint was of Serbian descent, and was born during the eleventh century in the town of Epivato between Selymbria and Constantinople. St. Paraschiva's parents were wealthy, devout Christians. They also had a son, Euthymius, who was tonsured a monk during his parents' lifetime, and later became the Bishop of Madytos. The virgin Paraschiva always yearned for the monastic life for the sake of devoting herself completely to Christ. After her parents died, she left her home and went first to Constantinople, then to the wilderness of Jordan, where she lived the ascetic life until old age. In her old age, an angel of God once appeared to her and said: "Leave the wilderness and return to your homeland; it is necessary that you render your body to the earth there, and your soul to the habitation of the Lord." St. Paraschiva obeyed, and returned to Epivat. There she lived for two years in ceaseless fasting and prayer and then gave up her soul to God and took up her abode in Paradise. Over the course of time her incorrupt relics were translated to Constantinople, to Trnovo, again to Constantinople, and then to Belgrade. In 1641 AD, her incorrupt relics were transferred to the cathedral at Iasi in Romania, where many healings have taken place. In Belgrade, water from the well of St. Paraschiva miraculously heals the sick.



St. Paul the Apostle

His memory is celebrated on June 29th and October 29th

St. Paul's significance in the history of Christianity can hardly be underestimated: an indefatigable missionary, the first interpreter of the Good News of Jesus Christ to the Gentile world, he is also the author of more New Testament books than any other writer. St. Paul was educated at the rabbinical school conducted in Jerusalem by the great rabbi Gamaliel. Active in the earliest persecutions of Christianity, it was during a trip from Jerusalem to Damascus to undertake the persecution of Christians there that St. Paul's life would take a crucial turn when he encountered the risen Jesus in a searing vision that left him temporarily blind. As a result of this revelation, he converted to the faith he once hated and was baptized as a Christian in Damascus, the very community he had set out to destroy. From that moment on, he described himself as a "slave of Jesus Christ." In the Book of Acts, Luke organizes St. Paul's missionary activity into three journeys that cover roughly 46-58 AD, the most active years of his life, as he evangelized Greece and Asia Minor. During these journeys St. Paul would travel throughout the ancient Mediterranean world, preaching and teaching, establishing new churches everywhere he went. St. Paul's letters are the oldest Christian documents that we have. Most modern scholars believe that his First Letter to the Thessalonians is the first book of the New Testament to be written. His letters have provided rich and deep theological insights that have never been surpassed in the

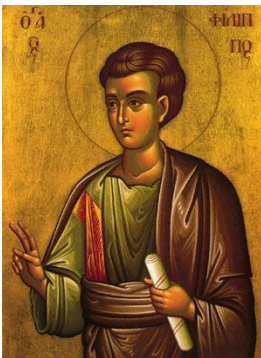
Church's history. The Book of Acts closes with St. Paul under house arrest in Rome, still carrying out his ministry of teaching and preaching, faithful to the Lord Jesus until the end. The apostle Paul was executed in Rome by being beheaded during the persecution of Christians by the emperor Nero, probably in 64 AD.



St. Pelagia the Repentant

Her memory is celebrated on October 8th

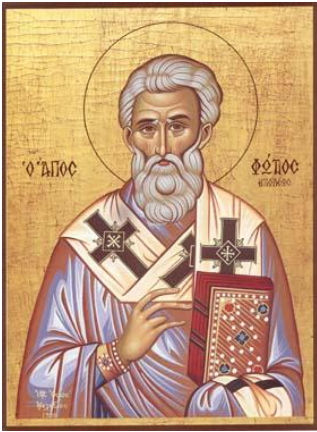
St. Pelagia was a famous actress and dancer, well-known for her sexual promiscuity, the first in the chorus in the theatre in the city of Antioch. It was her encounter with the Egyptian bishop Nonnus that radically changed her life. St. Nonnus was visiting the city of Antioch for a conference of bishops and was asked to preach in the cathedral. A man full of the Holy Spirit, the words of his sermon were simple yet eloquent and powerful and moved people to tears, including Pelagia, who happened to be present. Wishing to turn her life around and repenting of her sins, Pelagia rushed forward and presented herself to Nonnus, in front of everyone present, openly confessing her sins and begging him to baptize her. Recognizing her sincerity, Nonnus called for the deaconess Romana to be her sponsor and baptized her. The next day, St. Pelagia freed all of her slaves and saw to it that all of her wealth was distributed to the poor and indigent of the city, particularly orphans and widows. Following her baptism, she made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and there, on the Mount of Olives, she became a nun and lived as a hermit until she died.



St. Philip the Apostle

His memory is celebrated on November 14th

St. Philip was one of the twelve apostles called and chosen by the Lord to be part of His inner circle. Born in Bethsaida of Galilee, as were Peter and Andrew, the Gospel of John records the Lord's call to Philip; and Philip, in turn, bringing Nathaniel to the Lord to be one of His disciples. John's Gospel also records that it is Philip, together with Andrew, who takes some Greeks to meet the Lord Jesus; and that it is Philip who, at the Last Supper, asks Christ to show him God the Father. Jesus' response is electrifying: "Have I been with you so long and yet you still don't know Me, Philip? Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father." To be in the presence of Christ Jesus is to be in the presence of the Father! Following the death and resurrection of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Philip preached the Good News of Christ, crucified and risen from the dead, in Greece and Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Preaching in the city of Hierapolis in Asia Minor with his sister Mariamne, they were arrested by Amphipatos, the Roman prefect, and Philip was condemned to death by crucifixion. After his death, he was buried by Mariamne. In the 6th century, Pope John III acquired the relics of St. Philip from Hierapolis and built a church in Rome that still houses the relics of the apostle beneath its main altar.



St. Photios the Great

His memory is celebrated on February 6th

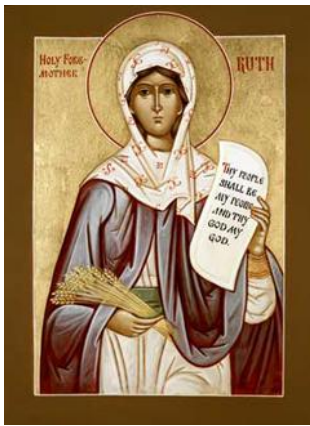
St. Photius was born in the early ninth century in Constantinople. He was the son of devout parents, Sergius and Irene, who suffered persecution under the iconoclast Emperor Theophilus; he was also a nephew of Saint Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople. An honorable man of singular learning and erudition, he was raised to the apostolic, patriarchal throne of Constantinople in the year 857 AD. The many struggles that he undertook for the Orthodox Faith against the Manichaeans, the Iconoclasts, and other heretics, and the attacks that he endured from Pope Nicholas I, and the great persecutions and distresses he suffered, are beyond number. Contending against the Latin teaching of the *filioque*, that is, the addition to the text of the Creed that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, he wrote a book called *The Mystagogy on the Holy Spirit* to show how the *filioque* destroys the unity and equality of the Trinity. He has left us many theological writings, homilies, and letters, including one to Boris, the King of Bulgaria, in which he set forth for him the history and teachings of the Seven Ecumenical Councils. Having tended the Great Church of Christ in an evangelical manner, he departed to the Lord while staying in the Monastery of the Armenians on February 6, 891 AD.



The Resurrection of Christ

This event is celebrated on Pascha and every Sunday

As the Scriptures say, “very early in the morning” on the Sunday after His crucifixion, Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary, the mother of James went to the tomb of the Lord Jesus to anoint his body with spices they had prepared for His burial. They found the heavy stone door to His tomb rolled back and an angel announced to them: “He is not here! He is risen!” The women ran and “told this to the apostles” who initially did not believe them. But the apostles themselves were soon confronted by the risen Christ, perhaps most famously in the case of Thomas, the last of the disciples to doubt the reality of the resurrection, as recorded in the Gospel of John. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, tells us that the essence of Christianity is: “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried and that He was raised on the third day, that He appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve. After that He appeared to more than 500 of the brothers and sisters at the same time, and then He appeared to James and all the apostles.” As the crucifixion forgives our sins, so the resurrection of Christ opens the door to eternal life for the human race. It is the beginning of the new creation spoken of in the Book of Revelation. It is the celebration of this event at Pascha that forms the heart of the Church’s worship and is called in our hymns “the feast of feasts and the festival of all festivals.”



St. Ruth the Moabitess

Her memory is celebrated on the Sunday before Christmas

The Book of Ruth is one of the shortest books in the entire Bible, being only four chapters long. Yet, it may be said that Ruth (whose name in Hebrew means compassion) is one of the most important women of the Bible, as she is the great-grandmother of David, the king and prophet of ancient Israel from whom the Lord Jesus is descended, as told in the opening verses of the Gospel of Matthew where Ruth is listed as one of only four women in the genealogy of Christ. The Book of Ruth gives us a glimpse into the life of an Israelite family during the period of the

Old Testament Judges, more than a thousand years before the birth of Christ. The other main character of the book is Naomi, who lived in Bethlehem with her husband and two sons. But during a famine, they were forced to move to the country of Moab. Naomi's husband died and her sons married Moabite women. Ruth was one of those women. After Naomi's two sons died in Moab, she decided to return to Bethlehem and Ruth, her daughter-in-law, returned with her. Although not an Israelite by birth, Ruth chooses to be faithful to the God of Israel and her faith, self-sacrifice and moral integrity find favor with God. Ultimately, she marries Boaz, a wealthy relative of Naomi and it is their son Obed who is the grandfather of David. The incorporation of Ruth, a Gentile, into the royal line of Israel foreshadows the coming of Christ's universal message of salvation.



St. Sarah the Righteous

Her memory is celebrated on the Sunday before Christmas.

Sarah was the wife of the Old Testament patriarch Abraham. God told Abraham that he would bless Sarah, giving Abraham a son by her. "I will bless her and she will become the mother of nations and there will be kings among her descendants." But because Sarah did not give birth to their son Isaac until she was quite old, Abraham in the meantime, had a son named

Ishmael by Sarah's Egyptian slave, Hagar, whom she offered to Abraham. In making this proposal Sarah followed a custom of her native Mesopotamia. Later, Sarah received a definite promise that she would give birth to a son within a year. The promise was fulfilled in the birth of Isaac. One day Sarah saw Ishmael tormenting Isaac, whereupon she demanded that Ishmael and Hagar be expelled from the family. At God's direction Abraham reluctantly obeyed. Nothing more is recorded of Sarah except that she died at an advanced age at Hebron. She was buried in the Cave of Machpelah, which Abraham bought after her death as a family tomb. The prophet Isaiah refers to Sarah as the mother of the Israelite nation, and St. Paul writes of her as the mother of the child of promise. St. Peter mentions her as an example of a good wife, and in the *Letter to the Hebrews* she is praised for her faith.

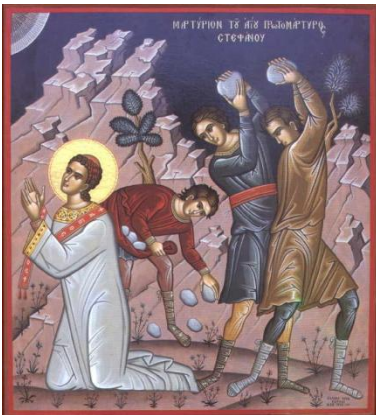


St. Sophia the Martyr

Her memory is celebrated on September 17th

St. Sophia and her three daughters – Faith, Hope and Love – lived in Rome and suffered for their faith in Christ during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian (reigned 117-138 AD). Sophia was a widow who had raised her daughters in the Christian faith. When Sophia and her three daughters were arrested for the crime of being Christian during the persecution of Hadrian, Faith was only twelve years old; Hope was only ten years old; and Love was only nine years old. Brought before the Emperor Hadrian,

the four of them held each other's hands "like a woven wreath," clinging to one another, strengthening one another, confessing their faith in Christ as Lord and refusing to offer sacrifices to the pagan fertility goddess Artemis. Sophia was forced to watch while each of the girls was tortured, one by one, the oldest first and the youngest last. Finally, with Sophia watching and encouraging her daughters to remain faithful to Christ, all three of her daughters were executed by beheading. Sophia was given the bodies of her three daughters, took them outside the city walls and gave them a proper burial. She remained at their graves for three days, weeping and praying to God. Then she in turn gave up her spirit to God, going to be with Christ and her daughters.

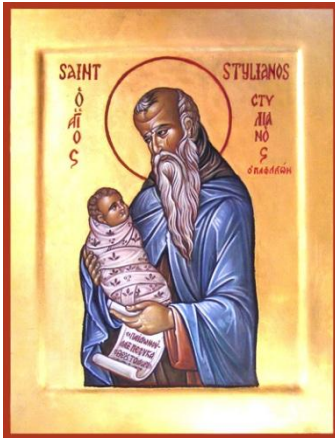


St. Stephen the Deacon and First Martyr

His memory is celebrated on December 27th

St. Stephen (in Greek, *Stephanos*, meaning “crown”) was the first person in history to be executed for being a Christian. His story is told in the New Testament by Luke the Evangelist in the *Acts of the Apostles* (6:1-7:60). Stephen, a “man full of the Holy Spirit,” was one of the seven deacons chosen by the Apostles to minister to the Greek-speaking Christians of the first community in Jerusalem. Arrested for his public preaching of Jesus

Christ, he was – like his Master before him – brought before the Sanhedrin, tried and judged. For his witness before the Sanhedrin to Jesus as the crucified and risen Messiah, he was condemned to death by stoning. Taken outside the city walls, Stephen was brutally stoned to death by an angry mob. The Scriptures say that: “They kept on stoning Stephen as he cried out, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ He knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them!’ and as he said this, he died.” The Scriptures also record that a man named Saul, who was later to encounter the Risen Christ while traveling on the road to the city of Damascus and become the great Apostle Paul, witnessed Stephen’s death and “approved of it.” Stephen was the first martyr, the first of a long line of many, many men and women who have paid the full price in blood for their faith in Jesus Christ.



St. Stylianos of Paphlagonia

His memory is celebrated on November 26th

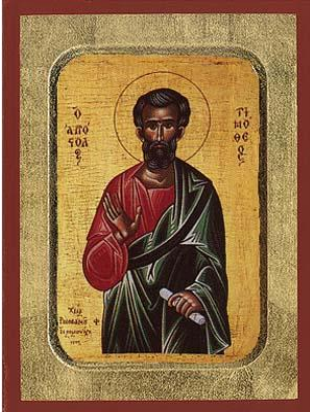
Saint Stylianos was born in Paphlagonia of Asia Minor sometime in the seventh century, living under conditions of extreme poverty. His was a hard and difficult childhood, but his loving parents instilled within him a desire to serve Jesus Christ. At a young age, Stylianos left the city and went to live among hermit monks, where he devoted his life to God. Eventually he left the hermits to live completely alone in a cave in the wilderness, where he spent his time in prayer and fasting. The goodness and faith of the saint soon became evident to the inhabitants of Paphlagonia, and they sought him out to hear his teaching and often, to have him pray over them. Many were healed of physical and mental illnesses by his prayers. St. Stylianos was known for his love of children, and when distressed parents would bring their sick children to him, he would heal them of their infirmities. Even after his death, the people of Paphlagonia believed that he could cure their children. Whenever a child became sick, an icon of St. Stylianos was painted and was hung over the child's bed. At the hour of his death, the face of St. Stylianos suddenly became radiant, and an angel appeared to receive his soul. Known as a protector of children, St. Stylianos is depicted in iconography holding an infant in his arms. Devout Christians often pray and ask him to help and protect their children, and childless women entreat his intercession so that they might have children.



St. Thomas the Apostle

His memory is celebrated on the Sunday after Easter and October 6th

St. Thomas, one of the Twelve Apostles, is called “the twin” by John the Evangelist. He was absent when the Risen Jesus first appeared to the rest of the disciples, who told him: “We have seen the Lord!” Refusing to believe them, he said: “Unless I see the marks of the nails on His hands and put my finger on those marks and my hand on the wound in His side, I will not believe.” A week later, St. Thomas had his own encounter with the Risen Jesus who invited him to touch His wounds. Confronted with the reality of Christ risen from the dead, Thomas confessed Jesus to be “My Lord and my God!” Because of this episode in his life, the Apostle Thomas is sometimes referred to as “doubting” Thomas; but his faith in the risen Christ would propel him to preach the Gospel in the Far East among the Parthians, Medes and Persians, and ultimately as far east as India where – along the Malabar coast in the Kerala district – there are still Christians who claim to be descendants of those who heard his preaching. St. Thomas was martyred near Madras by being speared to death for his witness to Jesus crucified and risen from the dead!



St. Timothy the Apostle

His memory is celebrated on January 22nd

St. Timothy was the spiritual son, messenger and closest companion of St. Paul who, in his letters, refers to Timothy as his “dear and faithful child in the Lord.” A native of Lystra in Lycaonia in Asia Minor (modern Turkey), Timothy was the son of a Jewish mother and a pagan Gentile father. He became a Christian as the result of St. Paul’s preaching and teaching when both he and St. Barnabas the Apostle passed through Lystra on his first missionary journey around the Mediterranean. A much younger man than St. Paul, who had known his grandmother

Eunice, Timothy acted as Paul’s personal messenger, delivering, for example, the two *Letters to the Corinthians* from Ephesus. His name is also associated with Paul’s letters to the Christian communities in Thessalonika, Colossae and Philippi. St. Paul addressed two letters to Timothy, outlining Timothy’s pastoral responsibilities to the fledgling Christian church at Ephesus that he was eventually to lead as that city’s first bishop. He was murdered by an angry, anti-Christian mob in 97AD during a festival honoring the pagan goddess Artemis of the Ephesians.

The Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary

Her memory is celebrated on August 15th, September 8th and November 21st



Among all of the saints honored by our Church, a special place belongs to Mary, the mother of our Lord, whom we remember at every celebration of the Liturgy, and indeed at every service in the Church, because of her unique role in God’s plan for our salvation. The Virgin Mary is called *Theotokos* or the Mother of God in the Orthodox tradition, a title given to her at the Third Ecumenical Council held in Ephesus in 431 AD, because she gave birth to the Lord Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, the Word of God made flesh, while still in her teens and betrothed to the righteous Joseph, a carpenter. Because of her humble obedience to God’s will and purpose for her life in His great plan of salvation, she is regarded by Orthodox Christians as

foremost among all the saints and is to be honored more than the angels. However, we do not worship Mary in any way. Because her womb contained the uncontainable Word of God she is called by Orthodox Christians a “new and living Ark of the Covenant,” the “throne of the King,” and a “new and living Temple” through whom God makes His loving presence known to the human race. We do not venerate her in isolation, but because of her unique relationship with Christ. We honor the mother because of the Son: the more we esteem Mary, the more vividly conscious we become of the majesty of her Son. During the public ministry of the Lord Jesus, she appears occasionally, most notably at the wedding in Cana of Galilee as recorded in John’s Gospel. She is also present at the foot of the cross with the apostle John and Mary Magdalene. After the Lord’s ascension into heaven, Luke the Evangelist, in his *Acts of the Apostles*, records that she is present in the upper room, praying with the rest of the disciples. Bodily assumed into heaven upon

her death, she is the first fruits of her Son's resurrection from the dead and her empty tomb in Jerusalem is still a pilgrimage site for Christians to this day.



The Life-Giving Spring of the Theotokos

This event is celebrated on the Friday of Bright Week

There used to be a beautiful church in Constantinople that had been built in the 5th century by the Christian Roman Emperor Leo at his own expense to commemorate the miraculous appearance of the Virgin Mary near a spring whose waters were said to produce miraculous healings. Because the waters of this spring continued to cure the many sick people who came to be healed of their diseases, the church built around it was called the Church of the Theotokos of the Life Giving Spring. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the church was destroyed by the Muslim conquerors of the city and its stones were used to build a mosque. A small chapel was allowed to remain at the site, with twenty-five steps that led down into the chapel that had been built around the spring, now surrounded by a small railing. But after the Greek Revolution in 1821, even this little chapel was destroyed by the Ottoman government and the spring was buried beneath the rubble. However, in 1833, the Ecumenical Patriarchate received permission to uncover the spring and rebuild the church. In 1835 the Ecumenical Patriarch Constantine II dedicated the church, once again, to the Theotokos. The church was again destroyed on September 6, 1955 during anti-Christian riots and a much smaller edifice stands on the site today, marking the spot where the Life-Giving Spring of the Theotokos still works miracles.



St. Theodore the Recruit

His memory is celebrated on February 17th

The Great Martyr Theodore the Recruit was a Roman soldier in the northeast part of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). When he was ordered to offer sacrifice to idols by his commanding officers, Theodore firmly confessed his faith in Christ the Savior. He was charged with setting a pagan temple on fire, and thrown into prison to be starved to death. The Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him there, comforting and encouraging him. Brought before the Roman governor, St. Theodore boldly and fearlessly confessed his faith, for which he was tortured and condemned to be burnt alive. Theodore was not afraid to die and with prayer for his executioners gave up his soul to God. This occurred in about the year 306. The body of St. Theodore was buried in the city of Euchaita. His relics were afterwards transferred to Constantinople, to a church built and dedicated to him in 452AD. His head is in Italy, in the city of Gaeto. A little over fifty years after the death of St. Theodore, the Roman emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363 AD), wanting to commit an outrage on the Christians, ordered the military commander of Constantinople to sprinkle all the food provisions in the marketplaces with the blood offered in sacrifice to pagan gods and goddesses. St. Theodore appeared in a dream to Archbishop Eudoxius, ordering him to inform all the Christians of the city that no one should buy anything at the marketplaces

that day, but rather to eat boiled wheat with honey (which is the origin of the custom of *kollyva*).



The Transfiguration of Christ

This event is celebrated on August 6th

The Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor is so important an event that it is recorded in three of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke. Christ Jesus took the inner circle of His disciples – Peter, James and John – climbed up Mount Tabor and there revealed His Glory to them, what later saints in the life of the Church would call “the uncreated Light of the Glory of God.” The Scriptures say that “the face of Jesus was shining like the sun and his clothes became a dazzling white.” The three startled disciples, who “were so frightened that they didn’t know what to say,” also saw Moses and Elijah, who represent the

Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament, speaking with Jesus. In this vision granted to Peter, James and John, the Lord Jesus revealed to them who He truly is: the uncreated Creator of the universe, the Lord of Glory and Master of All who, as the Apostle Paul says, “dwells in unapproachable light.” The accounts further speak of the descent of a cloud that covered them all and they heard the voice of God saying, “This is my beloved Son. Listen to Him,” confirming that Christ is indeed the Son of the living God and the Savior of the world.



St. Victor, Pope of Rome

His memory is celebrated on April 20th

Victor was the 13th bishop of Rome and the first pope from the continent of Africa. The son of a man named Felix, Victor was born in one of the Roman provinces of North Africa in the middle of the 2nd century AD. During his ten year ministry as the bishop of Rome (189-199 AD), the Church enjoyed a brief respite from persecution, probably due to the influence of a woman sympathetic to the plight of Christians named Marcia, a mistress of the Roman emperor, Commodus (who reigned 180-192 AD). She asked St.

Victor for a list of the names of those Christians condemned to work in the salt mines in Sardinia, back-breaking and brutal labor which few survived for any length of time, and was able to secure their release by Commodus. It was during the pontificate of St. Victor that the language of the Church in Rome became Latin rather than Greek. He was also the first bishop to insist that Easter always be celebrated on Sunday throughout the entire Church, a custom that was later ratified at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicea (325 AD). According to tradition, Victor was executed for being a Christian during the renewed persecution of Christians under the emperor Septimus Severus, whose reign began in 193 AD.



St. Zoe the Martyr

Her memory is celebrated on December 18th

The martyrdom of St. Zoe of Rome is intimately connected with the story of St. Sebastian, who was also martyred during the reign of the emperors Diocletian and Maximian (who reigned 284-305 AD). Zoe, who was the wife of the Roman jailer Nikostratos, had been unable to speak for six years when she first met Sebastian and, falling at his feet and making gestures to him, begged him to heal her. Sebastian made the sign of the cross over Zoe and she immediately regained her voice. As a result of her healing, Zoe and her husband Nikostratos confessed the Christian faith and, together with all those in their household, were baptized. St. Zoe was later to be arrested for being a Christian while praying at the tomb of the Apostle Peter, which is today beneath St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. At her trial, she confessed her faith in Christ and the judge ordered that she be hung up by her hair and executed by suffocation as a public spectacle. The year was 286 AD. Her body was then thrown into the Tiber River. While attempting to recover the body of his wife, her husband Nikostratos was also arrested on suspicion of being a Christian and, when he refused to renounce his faith in Christ, was drowned by being thrown into the Tiber with huge stones tied around his neck.

