

God is Wonderful in His Saints

Orthodox Saints commemorated in June

JUNE 1

Martyr Justin the Philosopher and those with him at Rome (166)

Born in 103, he was a philosopher from the Samaritan town of Shechem in Palestine, who had devoted his life to the search for truth, trying many philosophical schools and sources of human wisdom: the Stoics, the Peripatetics, the Pythagoreans and finally the Platonists. One day an old man (whose name and origin are unknown) appeared to him and spoke to him of the Prophets and Apostles who had learned of God not by their own wisdom, but by revelation of God Himself. He read the scriptures and was convinced of the truth of the Faith, but he would not be baptised or call himself a Christian until he had tested all the pagans' arguments against Christianity. To this end he traveled to Rome, where he engaged in debate at philosophical gatherings, impressing all with his wisdom. In Rome he also witnessed the martyrdom of Sts Ptolemy and Lucian; this moved him to write an *Apologia* for the Christian faith and the Christian people, which he gave to the Emperor Antoninus and the Senate. They were so moved by this document that the Emperor ordered that persecution of Christians should cease.

For the remainder of his life, Justin devoted all his skills to the proclamation of the Gospel and the defense of Christians. To the end of his life, wherever he preached Christ, he always wore his philosopher's garb. In addition to his *Apologia*, he wrote a number of other learned defenses of the faith.

Eventually he was imprisoned following the false accusations of Crescens, a jealous Cynic philosopher. He died (one source says by beheading, another by poison) in Rome in 167 under the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, successor to Antoninus. Our Holy Father Agapitus of the Kiev Caves (1095)

"A natural doctor, he was a disciple of St Antony of Kiev. He healed people by prayer and the prescribing of cabbage, which they made into a sort of bread. Prince Vladimir Monomachus was healed in this way, and this made Agapitus famed on all sides. The Prince's doctor, an Armenian, hearing of this, began to spread slander about him. When Agapitus became ill, the Armenian came and, looking at him, said that he would die in three days and that, if he did not do so, then he, the Armenian, would become a monk. Agapitus told him that it had been revealed to him by God that he would die, not in three days but in three months. And so it came to pass. After Agapitus's death, the Armenian went to the abbot of the Monastery of the Caves and asked him to make him a monk. He explained that Agapitus had appeared to him from the other world and reminded him of his promise. And so the one-time envier became a humble monk, by the providence of God whose care it is that all men be saved. St Agapitus entered into rest in about 1095." (*Prologue*)

JUNE 2

St Nikephoros the Confessor, patriarch of Constantinople (829)

He was born in Constantinople around 758, of pious parents: his father had been exiled under Constantine Copronymus for his steadfast veneration of the holy icons. Nikephoros served in the imperial palace as a secretary, but later renounced worldly success to struggle in monastic life near Constantinople. He built and administered a monastery which soon became filled with monks; but he himself never took the monastic habit, feeling himself unworthy. Though a layman, he took part in the Seventh Ecumenical Council at the request of the Emperor and Patriarch because of his remarkable knowledge of Holy Scripture. Much against his will, he was made Patriarch of Constantinople at the death of Patriarch Tarasios. He was made a monk, then elevated through all the priestly orders in a few days, then enthroned at St Sophia in 806.

A few years later, the Emperor Leo the Armenian took the throne. Patriarch Nikephoros, as was customary, sent him a Confession of the Orthodox Faith to sign. Leo put off signing the document until his coronation, then revealed himself to be an Iconoclast heretic. The Patriarch tried quietly to bring him back to the Orthodox faith, but to no avail. When the Emperor, in his turn, tried to make the holy Nikephoros bow to iconoclasm, the Patriarch clearly and publicly upheld the veneration of the holy icons. For this he was deposed and driven into exile at the Monastery of St Theodore, which he himself had founded. Here he reposed, having served for nine years as Patriarch, and thirteen years in exile and privation.

Holy New Martyr Constantine (1819)

He was born a Muslim on the island of Lesbos (Mitylene), but became convinced of the truth of Christ after he was healed of a serious illness by the aid of holy water in a church. He traveled to the Holy Mountain and was baptized at the

monastery of Kapsokalyvia. Later, he was seized by the Turks, who first tortured him viciously and, when he would not deny the Faith, hanged him in Constantinople.

Hieromartyr Erazmo of Ochrid (303)

"This saint was born in Antioch and lived in the reigns of Diocletian and Maximian. He lived in strict asceticism on Mount Lebanon, and was endowed by God with great wonderworking gifts. As a bishop, he set out to preach the Gospel. Arriving at the city of Ochrid, he restored the son of a man called Anastasius to life by his prayers, and baptised him. At this time, Erazmo baptised many other pagans and tore down the idolatrous altar in Ochrid. For this he was denounced to the Emperor Maximian, who was at that time staying in Illyria. The Emperor brought him before the copper image of Zeus, and ordered him to bring sacrifices and worship the idol. St Erazmo, by his power, caused a terrible dragon to come out of the statue, which terrified all the people. The saint then worked another wonder, and the dragon died. Then the saint preached Christ and baptised 20,000 souls. The furious Emperor commanded that all 20,000 be beheaded, and put Erazmo to harsh torture, before throwing him into prison. But an angel of God appeared to him, as once to the Apostle Peter, and led him out of the prison. After that, this servant of God went to Campania, where he preached the Gospel to the people, then returned again to the town of Hermelia, where he withdrew to a cave and lived in asceticism for the rest of his days. At the time of his death, he prostrated three times towards the East and, with upraised hands, prayed to God to forgive and give eternal life to all those who would, with faith, call upon his name. At the end of his prayer, a voice was heard from heaven: 'Let it be as thou hast asked, My little healer Erazmol' The saint looked up once more to heaven with great joy and saw a wreath of glory descending upon him, and a choir of angels, prophets, apostles and martyrs waiting to receive his holy soul. He finally cried: 'Lord, receive my spirit!', and breathed his last, in about the year 303. The cave and chapel of St Erazmo stand to this day not far from Ochrid, and from there is proclaimed to this day the great power of the martyr of God, Erazmo the hieromartyr." (Prologue)

Note: St Erazmo is commemorated on May 4th in the Slavonic Menaion, but St Nikolai Velomirovich gives today as the date on which he was been commemorated in Ochrid "from time immemorial".

JUNE 3

Holy Martyr Lucillian and those with him (270)

Lucilian spent most of his life as a pagan priest. In advanced old age, he learned the truth of the Christian faith and was baptized. The conversion of so public a figure quickly attracted attention, and Lucilian was brought to trial in Nicomedia. After enduring many tortures he was imprisoned with four young Christians, scarcely older than children: Claudius, Hypatius, Paul and Dionysius. When they were brought before Silvanos the governor, all five confessed their faith and were sentenced to death and cast into a fiery furnace. When they miraculously emerged unharmed, they were taken to Byzantium, where the four young men were beheaded and Lucilian was crucified. A maiden named Paula openly carried away the martyrs' bodies and buried them. For this she in turn was tortured and, refusing to renounce her faith in Christ, beheaded. This was in the reign of the Emperor Aurelian. A church was built in their honor in Constantinople.

Hieromartyr Lucian (2nd c.)

He was a Roman nobleman, a disciple of the Apostle Peter. Pope Clement sent him, along with St Dionysius the Areopagite, to preach the Gospel in Gaul, ordaining them both as bishops before they left. The Emperor Domitian later sent soldiers to Rome to seize Christian evangelists. They killed St Dionysius in Rome, then, hearing of the work of St Lucian, tracked him until found him in what is now Belgium. There he was beheaded along with his two fellow-missionaries, Maxianus the priest and Julian the deacon. A church was built over his relics.

Holy Martyr Dimitri, Tsarevich of Russia (1591)

He was murdered at the age of eight by the evil designs of Boris Godunov, in the town of Uglich. After his death he appeared to a monk and accurately foretold Boris Godunov's death. Countless miracles were worked at the grave of the Tsarevich. When his tomb was opened fifteen years after his death, his relics were found whole and incorrupt, and were solemnly buried in the Church of the Archangel Michael in Moscow.

The circumstances of Boris Godunov's death are worth telling. He first tried to kill the Tsarevich using the strongest poison, but it had no effect. He then had the child publicly beheaded. Not long afterwards a 'false Dimitri' arose, claiming to be the Tsarevich, and rallied a great army against Godunov. Godunov was driven to such a desperate position that he took his own life by poison, the 'remedy' he had intended for the true Dimitri.

JUNE 4

St Metrophanes, Archbishop of Constantinople (325)

He was born into a pagan family, but his father Dometius, along with all his family, became Christians and went to

Byzantium to escape persecution in Rome. Dometius was ordained a priest and in time became Bishop of Byzantium. When Dometius died, his elder son Probus became Bishop; then when Probus died, Dometius' second son Metrophanes succeeded him. Metrophanes was enthroned around the time that Constantine the Great was establishing Byzantium as the new capital of the Roman Empire. He sent a delegate to the First Ecumenical Council in 325, since he was unable to attend due to age and infirmity. The Emperor Constantine loved Metrophanes as a father and urged the entire Council to visit the ailing Bishop. Ten days later he died.

Holy Myrrh-bearers Mary and Martha, sisters of St Lazarus (1st c.)

Mary and Martha, with their brother Lazarus, were especially devoted disciples of our Lord; their story up to the time of the Resurrection can be found in Luke 10 and John 11-12. Mary and Martha were among the Myrrh-bearing women. They, with their brother, reposed in Cyprus, where Lazarus became first Bishop of Kition after he was raised from death by Christ.

An ancient tradition holds that Lazarus was thirty years old when he was restored to life by the Lord, and that he lived another thirty years. After he was raised from the dead, he never again laughed; but once, when he saw someone stealing a clay pot, he smiled and said, 'Clay stealing clay.' His name is a Greek version of *Elezazar*, meaning 'God has helped.'

JUNE 5

Hieromartyr Dorotheus, bishop of Tyre (361)

He became Bishop of Tyre in Phoenecia during the reign of Diocletian. The persecutions under Diocletian and Maximian drove him to Thrace; after their death he returned to Tyre. Persecution broke out again under Julian the Aposiate, and Dorotheus was seized and tortured to death at the age of 107. He wrote learned writings in both Greek and Latin, telling the lives of the Prophets and the Saints.

Our Holy Father Theodore the Hermit and Wonderworker (583)

He lived for many years as a hermit in the wilderness of the Jordan, and after long and hard ascetic struggle was granted the gift of wonderworking. Once he travelled by ship to Constantinople, and the ship went off course in a storm. The drinking water ran out, and the crew and passengers were near death from thirst. Theodore prayed to God, made the sign of the cross over the sea, and told the crew to drink the seawater. When they did so, they found to their astonishment that it was fresh and sweet. When the people began to honor him, he begged them only to thank God, who had worked the wonder. He reposed in peace.

Blessed Igor-George, tonsured Gabriel, great prince of Chernigov and Kiev (1147)

"Persecuted by his kinsfolk, he left the world and became a monk. The citizens of Kiev, disgusted with the Olgovitch dynasty [of which he had been prince], determined to exterminate it. They hurried to the monastery, seized the young and innocent schema-monk and killed him. For this evil-doing, much misfortune fell on the inhabitants of Kiev, but candles were several times seen to light of themselves on the grave of this blessed monk, and a fiery column appeared over the church where he was buried." (*Prologue*)

Blessed Constantine, Metropolitan of Kiev (1159)

In his day there was great disorder among the princes of Russia and in the Russian Church. One of the rival princes appointed a monk named Kim as Metropolitan of Kiev without seeking the blessing of the Patriarch of Constantinople, as was still done at that time. The Patriarch sent Metropolitan Constantine to investigate, and he deposed Kim and banished the priests whom Kim had ordained. This led to strife among the people, some of whom supported Constantine, some Kim. Finally, at the request of the princes, the Patriarch sent a third Metropolitan, and both Kim and Constantine were removed.

When Constantine died in 1159, his will ordered that he not be buried, but cast out to be eaten by dogs, since he felt that he was guilty of sowing discord in the Church. Horrified, but unwilling to go against his last wishes, the people threw his body outside as he had ordered. During the three days that it lay exposed, Kiev was wracked with thunderstorms and earth tremors, in which eight people were killed. Finally the Prince of Kiev ordered that the Metropolitan's body be buried in the church, and the weather immediately became calm. (see St Marcellinus, below.)

JUNE 6

St Hilarion the New, abbot of the Dalmatian Monastery (845)

He was born in 775 in Cappadocia. He became abbot of the Monastery of Dalmatus, where he fervently defended the icons against the attacks of the Emperor Leo the Armenian. He was exiled twice, first by Leo, then by Theophilus, but was finally freed by the Empress Theodora and again became abbot of the monastery, where he served until his repose.

Our Holy Mothers the Martyrs Archelais, Thekla and Susanna (298)

"As pure and virginal nuns, they lived the ascetic life in an unknown monastery near Rome. When a persecution of Christians arose under the wicked Emperor Diocletian, they fled to Campania and settled near the town of Nola. Their holy life could not be concealed, and people from nearby began to come to them for counsel, instruction and help in various trials and sicknesses, and they were finally seized by the pagans and taken for trial. They publicly and freely confessed their faith in Christ. When the judge, Leontius, questioned the holy Archelaïs about the Christian faith, she replied: 'It is by the power of Christ that I overcome the power of the devil and teach the people understanding and knowledge of the one, true God. By the name of my Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, it is given that, through me His servant, the sick find healing.' All three maidens were whipped, flogged with heavy staves, left to languish in prison and finally beheaded. When they were led out to the scaffold, angels appeared to them, which were seen by some of the executioners and inspired such fear in them that they dared not lift up their swords against the holy maidens. They, however, urged the executioners to finish their task. And thus, as lambs, were they beheaded in the year 293, and went to the Kingdom of Christ to rest in eternity and delight in beholding the face of God." (*Prologue*)

St Bessarion the Wonderworker of Egypt (466)

He is commemorated today in the Slavic Menaion. See February 20, the date of his commemoration in the Greek Synaxarion.

JUNE 7

Martyr Theodotus of Ancyra (303)

A secret Christian living in Ancyra, he would recover the bodies of the martyrs and give them honorable burial: it was he who buried the holy relics of the Virgin Martyrs Tecusa and her seven companions (May 8). When he was discovered by the pagan authorities, they seized him, tortured him and finally beheaded him.

Hieromartyr Marcellinus, pope of Rome (304)

"When the Emperor Diocletian summoned him and threatened him with torture, he offered sacrifice to idols and was, because of this, rewarded by the Emperor with a costly garment. But Marcellinus repented bitterly and began to weep both day and night for his rejection of Christ, even as the Apostle Peter had before him. A synod of bishops was held at that time in Campania, and the Pope dressed himself in sackcloth and sprinkled ashes on his head, and, going before the Synod, confessed his sin and asked them to judge him. The fathers said: 'Let him judge himself.' Then he said: 'I strip myself of the sacerdotal rank of which I am not worthy; and, further, let my body not be buried after my death, but let it be thrown to the dogs.' Having said this, he pronounced a curse on any who should dare to bury him. He then went to the Emperor Diocletian and, casting the precious garment in front of him, confessed his faith in Christ and cursed the idols. The enraged Emperor ordered that he be tortured and killed outside the city, together with three other men: Claudius, Cyrinus and Antoninus. The bodies of these three were buried at once, but the Pope's body lay there for thirty-six days. Then St Peter appeared to Marcellus, the new Pope, and told him to bury Marcellinus' body, saying: 'Whoso humbleth himself shall be exalted.' " (*Prologue*) (See St Constantine, above).

St Daniel of Skete in Egypt (5th c.)

He was a disciple of St Arsenios the great and abbot of the Scetis in Egypt (the monastic system known as the "Skete" takes its name from Scetis). He lived the communal monastic life for forty years, then in 420 retired to the desert, where he remained until his repose.

From the *Prologue*: "A saint has a very sensitive conscience. What ordinary people may consider a small sin, a saint sees as a great crime. It is said of Abba Daniel that highwaymen attacked him on three occasions and took him off to the mountains. Twice he was rescued, but the third time, in attempting to escape, he struck one of them with a stone and killed him, and then made his escape. That murder lay on his conscience like a lead weight. In perplexity as to what he should do, he went to Timothy, the Patriarch of Alexandria, and asked his advice. The Patriarch soothed him, and released him from all penance. But his conscience continued to gnaw at him, and he went to Rome, to the Pope. The Pope gave him the same reply as had the Patriarch. Still dissatisfied, Daniel visited the remaining patriarchs in turn; going to Constantinople, Antioch and Jerusalem, confessing to each of them and asking for advice. But he could find no peace. So he returned home to Alexandria and declared himself to the authorities as a murderer, and was flung into prison. At his trial before the governor, Daniel told how everything had come about, and pleaded that he might be killed too, that his soul might be saved from eternal fire. The governor was amazed at the whole thing, and said to him: 'Go your way, Father, and pray to God for me, even if you kill seven more!' Still dissatisfied with this, Daniel resolved to take a leper into his cell and care for him until he died, and then find another. He did as he had resolved, and in this way brought peace to his conscience."

JUNE 8

† Translation of the relics of Great-martyr Theodore Strateletes (319)

See his commemoration on February 8

St Ephraim, Patriarch of Antioch (545)

"During the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius, Ephraim was governor of the eastern regions. He was famed for his great piety and compassion, and was much esteemed for these virtues. When the rebuilding of Antioch, which had been destroyed by earthquake and fire, was put in hand, the Emperor ordered Ephraim to oversee the work. Ephraim performed this work with diligence and love. There was among the ordinary workers a certain bishop who had left his see for unknown reasons and was working as a labourer. Not a soul knew that the man was a bishop. One day he lay down to take a rest from the exhausting work with the other labourers, and fell asleep. Ephraim glanced at him, and saw a flaming pillar rising above the man and reaching up to heaven. Amazed and frightened, Ephraim summoned him and bound him under oath to reveal who he was. The man hesitated a long time, but finally admitted that he was a bishop and foretold that Ephraim would shortly be consecrated Patriarch of Antioch (the patriarchal throne having been empty since the old Patriarch, Euphrasius, perished in the earthquake). Ephraim was indeed elected and consecrated as Patriarch. For his goodness, purity and zeal for Orthodoxy, a great gift of wonderworking was given him by God. Once, in order to convince some heretic that Orthodoxy is the true Faith, he placed his omophor in the flames and prayed to God. The omophor remained unharmed in the fire for three hours. When the heretic saw this, he was afraid and cast his heresy aside. Ephraim entered peacefully into rest in 546." (*Prologue*)

Our Holy Mother Melania the Elder (410)

She was a wealthy and noble lady, born in Spain. Her husband and two of her children died and, seeing the vanity of worldly things, she travelled to Egypt to visit the monks at Nitria. She gave away most of her great wealth to the needy, and to Egyptian Christians being persecuted by the Arians. It is said that in three days she fed some 5,000 people. When the Orthodox in Egypt were exiled to Palestine, she went with them to Jerusalem, where she built a convent for virgins; she entered the convent herself, and reposed there in 410. Her grand-daughter, Melania the Younger, is commemorated on December 31.

St Zosimas, monk, of Phoenicia (Syria) (6th c.)

He labored in asceticism at a monastery near Tyre. Through his exceptional purity of life, he was granted the gift of prophecy. He foresaw the destruction of Antioch by earthquake and, like Abraham pleading for Sodom, prostrated himself on the ground and prayed that the city not be completely destroyed. Once he was traveling in a remote place and a lion attacked and killed his mule. He commanded the lion to serve him in the mule's place; the lion immediately took up Zosimas' pack and carried it to Caesarea, where Zosimas released it. St Zosimas reposed in peace.

JUNE 9

† St Cyril, archbishop of Alexandria (444)

"St Cyril was... from Alexandria, born about the year 376, the nephew of Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria, who also instructed the Saint in his youth. Having first spent much time with the monks of Nitria, he later became the successor to his uncle's throne in 412. In 429, when Cyril heard tidings of the teachings of the new Patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius, he began attempting through private letters to bring Nestorius to renounce his heretical teachings about the Incarnation; and when the heresiarch did not repent, Saint Cyril, together with Pope Celestine of Rome, led the Orthodox opposition to his error. Saint Cyril presided over the Third Ecumenical Council of the 200 holy Fathers in the year 431, who gathered in Ephesus under Saint Theodosius the Younger. At this Council, by his most wise words he put to shame and convicted the impious doctrine of Nestorius, who, although he was in town, refused to appear before Cyril. Saint Cyril, besides overthrowing the error of Nestorius, has left to the Church full commentaries on the Gospels of Luke and John. Having shepherded the Church of Christ for thirty-two years, he reposed in 444." (*Great Horologion*)

Today we commemorate St Cyril's repose. He is also commemorated on January 18, the date of his restoration to his see in Alexandria after he had been driven out by Nestorians.

St Columba of Iona (597)

He was born to a prominent noble family, the Ui-Niall clan of Ireland, but he forsook all worldly things and became a monk at a young age. He founded the monasteries of Derry and Durrow, and traveled as a missionary in Ireland for almost twenty years. In 565 he settled on the island of Iona, off the coast of Scotland; there he remained for 32 years, establishing the famous monastery of Iona and continuing in his missionary labors. He reposed in peace at Iona.

Saint Kyrdl of Belozarsk (1427)

He was born in Moscow in 1337, and took up the monastic life while young. Though he desired a life of strict silence and solitude, he was made abbot of the Simonov Monastery against his will. After a few years, obeying a revelation from the

most holy Theotokos, he left his abbacy and went to the wilderness of Belozersk (White Lake) to live as a hermit. Others gathered there to live under his guidance, and in time the community became the Monastery of Belozersk. Saint Kyril was sought from far off as a *staretz*, or spiritual father, and was granted gifts of wonderworking. His humility was remarkable, as the following story shows.

Once one of his monks conceived a terrible hatred for Kyril, which tormented him for a whole year. Finally the monk worked up the courage to reveal his hatred to Kyril himself. Though the monk was full of shame and remorse at his malicious passion, Kyril comforted him and said, 'All the others are in error about me; only you have perceived my unworthiness.' Saint Kyril then forgave the man and sent him away with his blessing.

Saint Kyril reposed in peace in 1427, at the age of ninety.

JUNE 10

Hieromartyr Timothy, bishop of Prusa (362)

"For his great spiritual purity, God gave him the gift of wonderworking, and he healed all manner of diseases and pains among the people. During the reign of the evil Emperor Julian, who had renounced Christ, holy Timothy was thrown into prison. The faithful visited him there to listen to the wise teaching of their bishop. When this came to his ears, Julian commanded that the executioner behead him in the prison. This was in 362, and his soul entered into Paradise while his relics remained, full of miraculous power, to help the people and declare the power of the Lord." (*Prologue*)

Holy Martyrs Alexander and Antonina (313)

In Alexandria, the virgin Antonina was brought before Festus, the Governor, tortured for her faith in Christ, then thrown into prison. A Christian soldier named Alexander, who had never before seen or heard of Antonina, was commanded by an angel of God to go to her. Finding her, he gave her his military cloak, wrapping it about her head and body; and with her head lowered, she was able to walk out of the prison while Alexander remained in her place. Alexander was brought before Festus, where he too confessed his faith in Christ. Antonina, learning of this, voluntarily came before the judge, who put both of them to hideous tortures, mutilating them in many ways before having them cast into a fire and burned alive.

A slightly different account says that Festus placed Antonina under guard in a brothel rather than a prison, so that her virginity might be defiled, and that it was from there that Alexander rescued her.

Festus, the Governor, was struck mute at the time of the holy martyrs' death, and was tormented by an evil spirit for seven days, at the end of which he died.

Hieromartyr Metrophanes, first Chinese priest, and the Chinese New Martyrs of the Boxer Uprising (1900)

"The Holy Martyrs of China were native Chinese Orthodox Christians brought up in piety at the Russian Orthodox Mission in Peking, which had been founded in 1685. During the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 against the foreign powers occupying China, native Chinese Christians were commanded by the Boxers to renounce Christianity or be tortured to death. Two hundred and twenty-two members of the Peking Mission, led by their priest Metrophanes Tsi-Chung and his family, refused to deny Christ, and were deemed worthy of a martyric death." (*Great Horologion*)

JUNE 11

† Holy Apostles Bartholomew and Barnabas

Saint Bartholomew was one of the Twelve Apostles, a Galilean; the Gospel accounts say little more about him. It is said that, after receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, he traveled in the service of the Gospel to Arabia and Persia, and brought to India a translation of the Gospel according to Matthew. Eusebius writes that one hundred years later Pantaeus, an illustrious Alexandrian scholar, found this gospel when he traveled in India. By most accounts Bartholomew ended his life in Armenia, where he met his martyrdom by crucifixion. According to many, he and Nathaniel are the same person: the Gospel accounts that speak of Bartholomew do not mention Nathaniel; and St John's Gospel, which mentions Nathanael as one of the Twelve, does not mention Bartholomew. But according to the Greek *Synaxarion*, Bartholomew and Simon the Zealot are one and the same.

Saint Barnabas was one of the Seventy, from Cyprus, a Levite and at one time a fellow-student with St Paul under Gamaliel. After Christ's Ascension, he led the Seventy until the Apostle Paul's conversion. He is mentioned often in the Acts of the Apostles, which describes some of his travels as a companion of St Paul. By all accounts, he was the first to preach the Gospel of Christ in Rome and in Milan. His wonder-working relics were discovered on the island of Cyprus in the time of the Emperor Zeno; on this basis the Church of Cyprus was established as an independent Church, since it had an apostolic foundation.

Commemoration of the appearance of the Archangel Gabriel to a monk on Mt Athos, and the revelation of the hymn "It is

Truly Meet" (*Axion Estin* (960))

A monk on the Holy Mountain was chanting the ancient hymn to the Most Holy Theotokos, "More honorable than the Cherubim..." (composed by St Cosmas the Hymnographer) in his cell, when the Archangel Gabriel appeared to him, disguised as a monk. The angel chanted the same hymn, but began it differently: "It is truly meet to call thee blessed, the Theotokos, the ever-blessed and most pure and Mother of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim..." Amazed at the hymn's beauty, the monk asked the stranger to write it down for him: the Angel inscribed it on a stone tablet with his finger, then vanished from sight. The tablet was brought to Constantinople and shown to the Emperor and the Patriarch as proof of the miracle. From that time, this version of the hymn began to be sung in the Divine Liturgy, as it is to this day.

JUNE 12

† Our Holy Fathers Onuphrios the Great and Peter of Mount Athos

They lived in different times and places, but are commemorated together.

Saint Onuphrios the Great (400). "This holy ascetic had been living a whole sixty years in the desert when the monk Paphnutius visited him. His hair and beard reached down to the ground, and long hair, as white as snow, had grown all over his body during his years of nakedness. His appearance was cadaverous, unearthly and awe-inspiring. Seeing Paphnutius, he called him by name and then recounted to him his life in the desert. His guardian angel had appeared to him and taken him to that place. He had for a long time only eaten earth, which was hard to find in the desert, and, after that, when he had survived an intensive struggle with diabolical temptations and when his heart had become utterly established in love for God, an angel had brought him bread to eat. And besides that, through God's gracious providence, a palm tree grew up at one side of his cell, that gave good dates, and a spring of water began to flow there. 'But especially,' said Onuphrios, 'my food and drink are the sweet words of God.' To Paphnutius' question about his receiving of Communion, the hermit answered that the angel of God brought him Communion every Saturday. On the next day, the old man told Paphnutius that it was the day of his departure from this world; then he knelt down, prayed to God and gave his spirit into God's hands. Then Paphnutius saw a heavenly light that illumined the body of the departed saint, and heard a choir of angelic hosts. He buried Onuphrios' body with honour and returned to his own monastery, there as a living witness to narrate to the brethren, for their edification, the wonderful life of the man of God and the greatness of God's providence towards those who give themselves wholly to His service." (*Prologue*)

The *Great Horologion* adds that Paphnutius intended to stay in the place where Onuphrios died, but soon the palm tree withered and the spring dried up, which Paphnutius took as a sign that he was meant to leave that place and return to live with the brethren.

Saint Peter of Mt Athos (734). He was born to a noble family in Constantinople and became a soldier. He was taken captive by the Saracens and thrown into prison in chains, in Samarra of Syria. He spent his long imprisonment praying to God to free him and send him to some deserted place where he could devote the rest of his life to asceticism and prayer. One day St Nicholas appeared to him along with St Simeon the God-receiver; when they touched his chains they melted like wax, and Peter instantly found himself outside Samarra. He set out for Rome, where he was tonsured as a monk by the Pope, then set out by ship to return home. During the voyage, the Mother of God appeared to him along with St Nicholas, and Peter heard her tell St Nicholas that she had set Mt Athos apart for Peter to live in solitude. Peter had never heard of Mt Athos, but disembarked there and settled in a cave. There he spent fifty-three years in complete solitude, praying and struggling with the harshness of the elements and the attacks of demonic powers. After he had withstood fierce temptations for awhile, an angel of God began to bring him bread every forty days. Like St Onuphrios, his humble life might have passed completely unrecorded; but by God's providence, one year before the Saint's death a deer-hunter found him and heard the tale of Peter's life, which he recorded. Saint Peter reposed in peace; his relics were taken to Macedonia.

JUNE 13

Holy Martyr Aquilina of Byblos (293)

She was born of Christian parents, and by the age of seven was already living as a true Christian. She boldly preached Christ to the maidens with whom she played, and for this was brought before the governor during the persecutions of Diocletian. Despite her young age she would not deny Christ to save her life. After horrible tortures, she was left for dead and thrown on a dunghill. But that night an angel appeared to her saying 'Arise and be healed!' Aquilina arose fully restored and praising God; but she begged not to be denied a martyr's death. She heard a voice from heaven saying 'Go, and it shall be to thee as thou desirest.' She returned to the city and to the governor's palace by night, doors opening miraculously before her, and stood before the governor's own bed. Needless to say, the governor was seized with terror upon waking to see the maiden he had thought dead. The next morning, she was beheaded. Her relics healed many of the

sick. At the time of her repose, she was only ten or twelve years old.

Saint Triphyllius, bishop of Leucosia (Nicosia) in Cyprus (370)

He was a disciple of St Spyridon (December 12), and like St Spyridon he became a bishop on Cyprus. Known for his mercy, purity, and ascetical way of life, he was called 'a living fountain of tears.' After shepherding his flock well for many years, he reposed in peace.

St Anna and her son John (5h c.)

"Taken as an orphan into the house of a nobleman and treated as an adopted child, she was cared for and educated in that house. The rich man considered her worthy to be married to his son. When the old man died, the family urged the son to put his wife away because of her low birth and to marry another more suited to his rank and wealth. The rich man's son feared God and did not want to do this. Seeing her husband in difficulties with his family, Anna secretly left him and ran off to a distant island where there was not a living soul. She was pregnant, and soon gave birth to a son. They laboured on the island for thirty years in fasting and prayer. Then, by divine providence, a hieromonk landed on the island. He baptised her son and named him John. Anna lived her ascetic life in the fifth century, and died peacefully." (*Prologue*)

JUNE 14

† Holy Prophet Elisha (Eliseus) (10th c. BC)

The disciple and spiritual heir of the Prophet Elijah (July 20), his story can be found in II Kings. Unlike most of the Old Testament prophets, he was granted the gift of working many miracles. He reposed in peace at a great age. The Fathers tell us that he was anointed by Elijah in the year 908 BC and reposed in peace at a great age in 839 BC. He was buried in Samaria. Even after his death, miracles of wonderworking were performed through his relics.

St Methodios, Patriarch of Constantinople (847)

He was born to wealthy parents in Syracuse of Sicily. He entered monastic life and in time became a priest in the service of Patriarch Nikephoros. Because of his great and well-known zeal for the holy icons, he was cruelly persecuted by a succession of iconoclast emperors. Around 815, He was sent as an ambassador to Rome on behalf of the Patriarch, who had been exiled by the Emperor Leo the Armenian. When he returned to Constantinople upon Leo's death, he was immediately exiled and imprisoned by Leo's successor, Michael the Stutterer. Upon Michael's death he was freed for a short time, but soon the Emperor Theophilus had him exiled to an island where, says the *Prologue*, "he spent seven years in prison with two common robbers, in damp conditions, without light and without sufficient food, as if in a grave." When the pious Empress Theodora restored the Empire to Orthodoxy, he was freed and elevated to Patriarch of Constantinople. On the Sunday of Orthodoxy, we commemorate the restoration of the Holy Icons by Theodora and Methodios. Despite many attacks by heretics while he was Patriarch, he served faithfully and reposed in peace.

St John Mavropos, Metropolitan of Euchaita (1100)

He is commemorated today on the Slavic Calendar; for his life, see October 5, his commemoration on the Greek Calendar.

JUNE 15

Holy Prophet Amos (8th c. BC)

He was an unlearned shepherd from the village of Tekoa in Zabulon, near Bethlehem. His prophecies, made during reign of King Uzziah, make up the Old Testament book which bears his name. He is ranked third among the "minor prophets" of the Old Testament.

Holy Martyr Vitus, with Modestus and Crescentia (303)

"St Vitus was born in Sicily of eminent pagan parents. Modestus was his tutor and Crescentia his governess. St Vitus was baptised early and, when only twelve years old, began to live an intensive ascetic life. Angels appeared to him, instructing him and encouraging him in his labours, and he was himself as radiant and handsome as an angel of God. A judge who beat him had the flesh of his arm wither away, but Vitus healed it by his prayers. His father was blinded when he saw twelve angels in his room 'with eyes like stars and faces like lightning', but Vitus restored his sight by his prayers. When his father sought to kill him, an angel appeared to him and took him to Lucania on the bank of the river Silaris, together with Modestus and Crescentia. St Vitus performed many miracles there for the sick and insane. He went to Rome at the summons of the Emperor Diocletian and drove out an evil spirit from his son. Far from rewarding him, the Emperor tortured him cruelly when he would not bow down before mute idols, but the Lord delivered him from torture and returned him to Lucania by His invisible arm, and there he and Modestus and Crescentia entered into rest in the Lord. St Vitus' relics are preserved in Prague." (*Prologue*)

In the West, St Vitus' aid is often invoked for the cure of many ailments, especially insanity and demonic possession. For this reason his name is given to *St Vitus' dance*, an acute neurological illness that produces uncontrollable movements in the

face and limbs, usually occurring in children.

Blessed Augustine, bishop of Hippo (430), and his mother Monica (387)

After seeking truth among many religious schools, including the Manicheans, Augustine was turned to faith in Christ through the counsel and fervent prayers of his mother St Monica. The story of his early life and conversion is beautifully told in his *Confessions*. He lived for seventy-six years, the last thirty-five as bishop of Hippo in north Africa. He died in a barbarian attack on that city.

In recent years, a few Orthodox writers have tried to deny that Augustine is a Saint of the Orthodox church (mostly due to some theological errors in his writings which have been unduly promoted in the Latin church). These claims are false: from the time of his canonization, he has been commemorated as a Saint.

Holy Martyr Lazar, Prince of Serbia (1389)

"He was one of the greatest men of Serbia who ruled the kingdom after king Dušan. Upon the death of King Uroš, Lazar was crowned King of Serbia by Patriarch Ephraim. He sent a delegation to Constantinople, including a monk called Isaiah, to plead for the removing of the anathema from the Serbian people. He went to war on several occasions against the Turkish Pasha, finally clashing with the Turkish king, Amurât, at Kosovo on June 15, 1389, being slain there. His body was taken to Ravanica near Cupria, a foundation of his, and buried there, but was later taken to New Ravanica in Srem. During the Second World War, in 1942, it was taken to Belgrade and placed in the Cathedral, where it is preserved to this day and offers comfort and healing to all who turn to him in prayer. He restored Hilandar and Cornjak, built Ravanica and the Lazarica in Kruševac and was the founder of St Panteleimon, the Russian monastery on the Holy Mountain, as well as numerous other churches and monasteries." (*Prologue*)

Ju.

St Tikhon (Tychon), bishop of Amathus in Cyprus (425)

He was born to pious Christian parents on Cyprus. Known for his piety and purity of life, he was became a clergyman, then was made Bishop of Amathus by St Epiphanius (May 12). He served faithfully as bishop in Cyprus for many years, finally reposing in peace. At this time there were still many pagans in Cyprus, and he worked tirelessly as a missionary among them, bringing many to the Faith. He was known as a wonder-worker from his youth. "His father was a baker, and whenever his father left him alone in the shop, he would distribute the bread to the poor without payment. His father reproached him once for doing this, so he prayed to God and their storehouse became so full of grain that they could open the door only with difficulty." (*Prologue*) Once he planted a dry slip from a grapevine, and it miraculously turned green and bore fruit. After his repose, on his feast day the vine would be laden with unripe grapes, as usual for this time of year; but during the Divine Liturgy, the grapes would become fully ripened.

Holy Martyrs Tigris and Eutropios (404)

When St John Chrysostom was exiled, the Great Church caught fire and was destroyed. Most of the people saw this as a judgment upon the City for exiling the holy Archbishop; but St John's enemies tried to blame his followers and persecuted them fiercely. Two of these loyal followers were Tigris, a priest, and Eutropios, a reader. Tigris had been a slave in his youth and was a eunuch; but once he was freed he had given his life selflessly to the service of the Church. The governor, Optatus, had Tigris viciously tortured, then sent him into exile in Mesopotamia, where he died in captivity. Eutropios, another pure and holy servant of the Church, was flogged with whips and rods, then hanged. Christians carrying his body for burial heard a beautiful angelic chanting in the sky above them.

JUNE 17

† Martyrs Manuel, Sabael, and Ismael of Persia (362)

"The holy Martyrs Manuel, Sabael, and Ismael, Persians by race and brethren according to the flesh, were sent by the Persian King as ambassadors to Julian the Apostate to negotiate a peace treaty. While with him at a place near Chalcedon, they refused to join him in offering sacrifice to his idols. Scorning the immunity universally accorded ambassadors, he had them slain in the year 362. This was a cause of the war with Persia in which Julian perished miserably the following year." (*Great Horologion*)

Our Holy Father Botolph, Abbot of the Monastery of Ikenhoe (630)

Saint Botolph was born in Britain about the year 610 and in his youth became a monk in Gaul. The sisters of Ethelmund, King of East Anglia, who were also sent to Gaul to learn the monastic discipline, met Saint Botolph, and learning of his intention to return to Britain, bade their brother the King grant him land on which to found a monastery. Hearing the King's offer, Saint Botolph asked for land not already in any man's possession, not wishing that his gain should come through another's loss, and chose a certain desolate place called Ikenhoe. At his coming, the demons inhabiting Ikenhoe

rose up against him with tumult, threats, and horrible apparitions, but the Saint drove them away with the sign of the Cross and his prayer. Through his monastery he established in England the rule of monastic life that he had learned in Gaul. He worked signs and wonders, had the gift of prophecy, and "was distinguished for his sweetness of disposition and affability." In the last years of his life he bore a certain painful sickness with great patience, giving thanks like Job and continuing to instruct his spiritual children in the rules of the monastic life. He fell asleep in peace about the year 680. His relics were later found incorrupt, and giving off a sweet fragrance. The place where he founded his monastery came to be called "Botolphson" (from either "Botolph's stone" or "Botolph's town") which was later contracted to "Boston." (*Great Horologion*)

JUNE 18

† Martyr Leontius, and with him Martyrs Hypatius and Theodoulos, at Tripoli in Syria (73)

An honored Roman commander in Tripoli of Phoenicia, he was described as being 'of great physical stature, powerful, strong and bold in battle'. When it was learned that he was a Christian and had given grain to the poor from the imperial storehouse, the governor Hadrian, a great persecutor of Christians, sent Hypatius, a military commander, and Theodoulos, a soldier, along with some others to arrest him. On the way Hypatius fell gravely ill with a fever, and the company had to delay its mission. One night an angel of the Lord appeared to Hypatius and said, 'If you desire to be healed, you and your soldiers must cry to heaven three times: "O God of Leontius, help me!"'. Hypatius told his comrades of his vision, and when they all cried out as instructed Hypatius was instantly healed. Hypatius and Theodoulos then went on ahead of the other soldiers and found Leontius. Leontius received them hospitably and offered them refreshment. As they rested in his house, he proclaimed his faith in Christ and their hearts began to burn within them. While Leontius was still speaking, a brilliant cloud descended upon the two soldiers and shed dew on them while Leontius said 'In the name of the All-holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.' Thus were they baptized by the Holy Spirit Himself.

When the cruel Hadrian discovered this, he had the two soldiers beaten fiercely, then beheaded; he then subjected Leontius to the cruelest tortures, under which he finally died, unwavering in his faith. This was during the reign of Vespasian.

JUNE 19

† Holy Apostle Jude, the Brother of the Lord (80)

He was one of the Twelve and a kinsman of the Lord according to the flesh (see Luke 6:16, Acts 1:13; According to holy Tradition, Joseph the Carpenter, before he was widowed, had four sons by his wife Salome: James, Hosea, Simon and Jude). As an Apostle, St Jude preached in Mesopotamia, Arabia and Syria, and met a Martyr's end in Beirut. He is the author of the New Testament Epistle that bears his name. His name ("Judas" in Greek, from "Judah" in Hebrew) means "praise".

Our Holy Father Paisius the Great of Egypt (400)

He was born in Egypt around the year 300. After receiving a vision in a dream, his mother consecrated him to God as a monk, and he became a disciple of Abba Pambo (July 18) when scarcely more than a child. He was a fellow-disciple with St John the Dwarf (November 9), who later wrote his life. Paisius excelled in ascetical labors, and was granted many revelations. Once the Prophet Jeremiah, whom he especially venerated, appeared to him. At another time the Lord himself appeared to him with two Angels, and allowed Paisius to wash His feet. He was granted a special gift of being able to live without food: He often went without food for two weeks, and once, according to St John the Dwarf, for seventy days. He underwent terrible struggles with the demons, who sometimes appeared to him in horrible forms and sometimes as angels of light. He was once asked what virtue is the highest of all, and answered "That which is done in secret." He reposed in peace at a great age. His relics can still be venerated at the monastery of Amba Bishoy in Wadi Natrun in Egypt, where they still work healings and other miracles.

Holy Myrrh-bearer Mary, mother of the Apostle James (1st c.).

JUNE 20

Hieromartyr Methodius, bishop of Patara/Olympia (312)

Noted in his own time for his wisdom and virtue, he was called *Eubolos*, meaning "of good counsel." He was among the first to oppose the heretical writings of Origen. He was bishop in Patara (according to some sources) or Olympia (according to others), then of Tyre in Phoenecia. Under the Emperor Maximinus, he was attacked by the pagans and received the crown of martyrdom in Chalkis in Greece.

St Kallistos I, Patriarch of Constantinople (1363)

For twenty-eight years he lived the ascetical life on Mt Athos as a disciple of St Gregory of Mt Sinai. Later, he founded the monastery of St Mamas, also on Mt Athos. In 1350 he was elected Patriarch of Constantinople. After four years, he resigned the patriarchal throne to return to the Holy Mountain, but was called back to the throne, where he remained until his death in 1363. He wrote the definitive lives of St Gregory the Sinaite and St Theodosius of Trnovo. He was known to St Maximos Kapsokalyvia (the Hut-burner), who foretold his death: On his final journey to Serbia, on which he died, the Patriarch stopped on Mt Athos, where St Maximos saw him and said, "This elder will not see his flock again, because I hear behind him the hymn over the grave, "Blessed are those that are undefiled in the way..."

Blessed Studios (5th c.)

He was a prominent nobleman and consul in Constantinople. In the City he founded both the Church of St John the Forerunner in 463, and the monastery thereafter called the Studion in honor of him. The Studion monastery nurtured a long line of ascetics, teachers, and martyrs; perhaps the best known is St Theodore the Studite (November 11), the great defender of the holy icons. The monastery was destroyed by the Crusaders in 1204, restored in 1293 by Emperor Andronicus II.

JUNE 21

† Martyr Julian of Tarsus in Cilicia (305)

"Of a noble senatorial family, he lived in Tarsus in Cilicia and suffered in the reign of Diocletian. Although only eighteen years old when he was taken for trial for the Faith, St Julian was already both educated and resolute in Christian faith and devotion. The imperial governor took him from city to city for a whole year, torturing him all the while and attempting to persuade him to renounce Christ. Julian's mother followed her son at a distance. When the governor seized her and sent her to urge her son to renounce Christ, she spent three days in the prison with him, giving him precisely the opposite advice, teaching him and giving him the strength not to lose heart but to go to his death with courage and gratitude to God. His torturers then sewed Julian into a sack of sand with scorpions and snakes and threw him into the sea, and his mother also died under torture. The waves carried his body onto the shore, and the faithful took it to Alexandria, where they buried it in 290. His relics were later taken to Antioch. St John Chrysostom himself gave an eulogy for the holy martyr Julian: 'A holy voice comes forth from the lips of the martyr, and with this voice is poured out a light brighter than the rays of the sun.' He said further: 'Take whomsoever you will, be he a madman or one possessed, and lead him to the grave of this saint, to the martyr's relics, and you will see the demon immediately jump out and flee as from blazing fire.' It is evident from this speech that many wonders must have been wrought at St Julian's grave." (*Prologue*)

Our Holy Fathers Julius and Julian (5th c.)

They were brothers from Greece, Christians from childhood; Julius was a priest, Julian a deacon. At the command of the Emperor Theodosius the Younger, they set out as missionaries to destroy idols and bring the people to faith in Christ throughout the Empire. During their lifetime they built a hundred churches and brought thousands to Christ. They reposed in peace near Milan: that city's people once invoked St Julius for help against wolves.

Jul

Hieromartyr Eusebius, bishop of Samosata (380)

In the struggle against the Arian heresy, Meletius, Patriarch of Antioch, was deposed, and the emperor Constantius demanded that Eusebius surrender the document that proved his legitimate appointment to the Patriarchal throne. Eusebius said he would not surrender it without the permission of all who had signed it and, when imperial soldiers threatened to cut off his right hand, he held out both his hands to them. When Constantius heard of this, he was struck with admiration and ceased his persecution of the bishop. As the Arian heresy continued to rage, Eusebius stood strong, and was finally exiled by order of the Emperor Valens. When the messenger bearing the edict of banishment arrived, Eusebius warned him to keep quiet lest the people, hearing why he had come, should kill him. Then Eusebius left the city on foot, under cover of darkness, in order to protect the messenger from harm. Upon the death of Valens, Eusebius returned to from exile and traveled throughout Syria (though he was now a very old man), appointing priests and bishops known for their Orthodoxy. About 380, as he was entering a village to enthrone a bishop, an Arian woman threw a tile at him from a rooftop, fracturing his skull. As he lay dying, he made all the bystanders swear not to take any revenge.

Saint Gregory the Theologian corresponded with Eusebius, and esteemed him so highly that in a letter to him he wrote, "That such a man should deign to be my patron also in his prayers will gain for me, I am persuaded, as much strength as I should have gained through one of the holy martyrs."

St Alban, First Martyr of Great Britain (early 3rd c.)

He was a soldier in the Roman army and, according to the venerable Bede, was brought to faith in Christ by a fugitive priest to whom he gave shelter. The saint exchanged clothes with the priest, allowing him to escape and ensuring his own martyrdom. Some writers, including St Bede, place his martyrdom during the reign of Diocletian (286-303).

Saint Alban's tomb was venerated as early as 429 by St Germanus of Auxerre. The town of Verulamium is either his home town or the place of his martyrdom; near it a monastery was founded, around which grew the English town of St Albans.

JUNE 23

Martyr Agrippina of Rome (3rd c.)

She lived in virginity in Rome during the reign of Valerian (253-260) — as the *Prologue* says, 'expelling the stench of the passions from her heart with the sweet-smelling perfume of purity and chastity.' She voluntarily presented herself to the pagans and announced herself to be a Christian, for which she was tortured to death. Her friends Vassa, Paula and Agathonica took her relics to Sicily for burial. A church was built there in her name, and many miracles were worked there.

Commemoration of the Vladimir Icon of the Most Holy Mother of God

Moscow was besieged by the Tartar king Ahmet. Prince Ivan Vasillievich brought troops to defend the city, but they were far outnumbered by the Tartar forces. Despairing of their hope in human protection, the people of the city pleaded for deliverance to the holy Mother of God before her icon. The Tartar forces were unaccountably struck with terror, and retreated in confusion, saving the city. On this day, the miracle, and the holy icon through which it was brought about, is commemorated in Russia.

JUNE 24

† Nativity of St John the Baptist

The wonderful story of the Forerunner's conception and birth is told in the first chapter of the Gospel according to Luke. Together with the Most Holy Theotokos and Christ Himself, both his conception and his birth are commemorated as Feasts of the Church. His name, *Johanan* in Hebrew, means "The Lord is Gracious."

The *Prologue* adds: "The news of the angel's appearing to Zacharias, of his dumbness and of the loosening of his tongue at the exact moment that he wrote 'John', was carried throughout all Israel, coming to Herod's ears. So, when he sent men to kill all the infants around Bethlehem, he sent men off to Zacharias' family house in the hills, to slay John also. But Elisabeth hid the child in good time. The king was enraged at this, and sent an executioner to the Temple to kill Zacharias (for it was then his turn to serve in the Temple again). Zacharias was killed between the court and the Temple, and his blood clotted and solidified on the paving slabs, and remained as an enduring witness against Herod. Elisabeth hid herself and the child in a cave, where she soon died. The young John remained in the wilderness alone, in the care of God and His angels." See September 5.

Synaxis of Sts Zacharias and Elisabeth

Holy Martyrs Orentius, Pharnacius, Eros, Firminus, Firminius, Cyriacus and Longinus (3rd c.)

They were all brothers, soldiers together during the reign of Maximian. During a Roman campaign against the Scythians beyond the Danube, Orentius fought in single combat with Marathom, a Scythian champion like Goliath, and slew him. The Roman commander ordered a sacrifice to the idols in thanksgiving for the victory; but Orentius and his brothers declared that they were Christians and would make no such sacrifice. In a moment, the champion of the battle became a persecuted confessor: without regard for his great victory, he and his brothers were sentenced to exile. All of them died on the way, from hunger or torture.

JUNE 25

Afterfeast of the Nativity of St John the Baptist

† Virgin-Martyr Febronia of Nisibis (310)

Though the daughter of a Roman senator and a great beauty, she fled the world and entered a monastery in Mesopotamia. (So great was her beauty that the abbess had her stand behind a screen while reading to her monastic sisters.) At that time the Emperor Diocletian sent a certain Selenus, along with his nephew Lysimachus, on a mission to find and destroy Christians in the East. Though Selenus was a fierce persecutor of the Christians, Lysimachus felt sympathy for them and secretly protected them whenever he could. Selenus and his party came to Nisibis, where Febronia's virtue and holiness had already become well-known, though she was still only twenty years old. Selenus summoned her and made every effort to convince her to renounce her faith. When she stood firm, she was first viciously dismembered then beheaded.

Lysimachus gathered her relics and took them to the monastery for burial. At the monastery he, together with many soldiers, were baptized. The holy Febronia's relics worked many healings, and she herself appeared to the other nuns on the anniversary of her repose, standing in her usual place among her sisters. Her relics were translated to Constantinople in 363.

Our Holy Father Dionysios, founder of the Monastery of St John the Forerunner on Mt Athos (1380)

He was born in Koritza in Albania. His elder brother Theodosius went to the Holy Mountain and in time became abbot of the monastery of Philotheou. A few years later Dionysios followed his brother and became a monk under him at Philotheou. A heavenly light began to appear to Dionysios every night at the same place, some distance from his monastery. Believing that the light was a divine sign that he was to build a monastery, Dionysios left the Holy Mountain to seek the help of his brother (now Metropolitan of Trebizond) and the Emperor Alexios Comnenis. From the Emperor he received both money and a Royal Charter, which is still kept at the Monastery of St John the Forerunner, which Dionysios founded in 1380, and which is often referred to as the Dionysiou Monastery. Later, pirates plundered the monastery, and Dionysios went to Trebizond, where he reposed at the age of seventy-two.

JUNE 26

St David of Thessalonica (540)

For years he lived the ascetic life in a crude tree-house he had fashioned in the branches of an almond tree. Then he moved to Thessaly, where he continued his life of fasting, prayer and vigil, cleansing his soul and being made worthy to perform many miracles. Once, when the Emperor Justinian visited him, he took a live coal in his bare hand and censured the Emperor. The Emperor, seeing this, bowed to the ground before David. He reposed in peace.

Fe. of the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God. Feast of the *Hodigitria* Icon of the Mother of God

This icon was once kept in the Church of Blachernae in Constantinople. In 1383, it suddenly appeared in the sky over Lake Ladoga, then travelled through the air to the city of Tikhvin, where it alit by the River Tikhvina. A monastery was built there to house it. In the twentieth century it was brought to America. Innumerable miracles have been worked through this wonderworking icon, especially healings of children.

On this day is also commemorated the *Hodigitria* Icon of the Mother of God. According to many accounts, this icon and the Tikhvin Icon are one and the same, so we list them together. *Hodigitria* is translated "Directress" or more literally "She who shows the way." It was painted by Luke the Evangelist himself, who knew the Mother of God in the flesh. Over the years the icon was taken from Antioch to Jerusalem, then to Constantinople where it was enshrined in the Church of Blachernae. When Constantinople was attacked at the same time by the Persians and the Scythians, Patriarch Sergius carried the holy icon around the ramparts, and the city was miraculously delivered from its pagan enemies. During the iconoclast period, the icon was hidden in a wall in the monastery of the Pantocrator.

JUNE 27

† St Sampson the Hospitable of Constantinople (530)

He is counted as one of the Holy Unmercenary Physicians. "This saint was born of rich and eminent parents in ancient Rome, where he studied all the secular wisdom of that time, devoting himself in particular to the study of medicine. Sampson was a compassionate and liberal physician, and gave the sick medicine for both soul and body, counselling each man to fulfil the requirements of the Christian faith. He moved to Constantinople, where he lived in a tiny house from which he distributed alms, comfort, advice, hope, medicine and all possible aid to those suffering in spirit and in body. The Patriarch heard of Sampson's great virtue and ordained him priest. At that time the Emperor Justinian the Great became ill with what his doctors believed to be an incurable disease. The Emperor prayed with great fervor, and God revealed to him in his sleep that Sampson would heal him. When the Emperor summoned Sampson to court, the old man had only to put his hand on the diseased place and the Emperor was healed. When Justinian offered him an immense sum of money, Sampson thanked him but would accept nothing, saying to the Emperor: 'O Emperor, I had silver and gold and other riches, but I left it all for the sake of Christ, that I might gain heavenly and eternal wealth.' When the Emperor insisted on doing something for him, Sampson asked him to build a house for the poor. In that home, Sampson cared for the poor as a father cares for his children. His compassion for the poor and weak was second nature to him. This holy man, filled with heavenly power and goodness, entered peacefully into rest on June 27th, 530. He was buried in the Church of the Holy Martyr Mocius, his kinsman. After his death, Sampson appeared many times to those who called upon him for aid." (*Prologue*)

St Severus the Priest (6th c.)

"He lived in central Italy. A man of rare holiness, he was once called to hear the confession of, and give Communion to, a

man at the point of death. He tarried, working in his vineyard, and the news was brought to him there that the sick man had died. Stricken with grief, as if he had himself killed the man, he wept bitter tears over the corps, and God raised the dead man to life again in response to his fervent prayer. Then Severus confessed him and gave him Communion, preparing him for a Christian leaving of this world, and on the eighth day the man died again." (*Prologue*)

St Joanna the Myrrh-bearer (1st c.)

This is Joanna the wife of Chuza, a servant in Herod's household (Luke 8:3). When Herod had John the Baptist beheaded, it was Joanna who recovered the head and buried it on the Mount of Olives. She reposed in peace.

JUNE 28

† Sts Sergius and Herman (1353), abbots of Valaam

After helping to establish Orthodoxy among the Karelian Finns, they founded the famous Valaam Monastery on Lake Ladoga in northern Russia. Both reposed in the same year.

Synaxis of the Icon of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos "Of the Three Hands"

Saint John of Damascus (December 4), the great defender of Orthodoxy against the iconoclasts, was falsely accused of plotting against the Caliph of Damascus through the intrigues of the iconoclast Emperor Leo the Isaurian (reigned 717-741). The Caliph ordered St John's hand to be cut off for his suspected treachery. The saint asked for the severed hand, and passed the night praying fervently for the aid before an icon of the most holy Theotokos. Waking in the morning, he found his hand miraculously restored, with only a scar around the wrist where it had been completely severed. In thanksgiving, St John had a silver hand mounted on the icon. When he became a monk in the monastery of St Sabbas in the Holy Land, he took the icon with him. It remained there until it was given to St Sabbas (Sava) of Serbia (January 14), who brought it to Serbia. Later it was miraculously taken to the Hilandar Monastery on the Holy Mountain (carried, according to legend, from Serbia to Mt Athos by an unguided donkey), where it may now be found.

Translation of the Relics (412) of the Holy and Wonderworking Unmercenarys Cyrus & John

They are counted among the Unmercenary Physicians. For their lives, see January 31.

Our Holy Father Sennuphius the Standard-Bearer (4th c.)

"A great ascetic and wonderworker of the Egyptian desert, he was a contemporary of Patriarch Theophilus and the Emperor Theodosius the Great. He is called 'the Standard-Bearer' because he once helped the Emperor Theodosius to gain a victory over enemy forces by his prayers. When the Emperor summoned him to Constantinople, he replied that he was unable to go, but sent his torn and patched monastic habit and his staff. Going out to battle, the Emperor put on Sennuphius's habit and carried his staff in his hand, and returned victorious from the battle." (*Prologue*)

JUNE 29

† The Holy, Glorious and All-praised Leaders of the Apostles, Peter and Paul

For the lives of these two great Apostles, we can only recommend a reading of the entire New Testament, which contains accounts of their lives and many of their inspired writings. St Peter, after preaching in Judea, Antioch and parts of Asia, came to Rome, where he was crucified by order of the Emperor Nero, about the year 66. Being led to the cross, he begged the executioner to crucify him upside-down, because he felt unworthy to partake of the same death as the Savior.

St Paul's apostolic labors extended from Arabia to Spain. He also ended his earthly course in Rome, beheaded by order of Nero, some say at the same time that St Peter was crucified.

St Mary, mother of John-Mark, nephew of Apostle Barnabas, at Jerusalem (1st c.)

JUNE 30

Synaxis of the Holy, Glorious and All-praised Twelve Apostles

Though each of the Twelve Apostles has his own Feast day, on this day they are commemorated together. Of the Twelve, only St John the Theologian died in peace; the rest met a martyr's end. Following are their individual feast days and the manner of their end.

Roman citizens could not be crucified: crucifixion was considered a shameful death unworthy of a citizen. For this reason the Apostle Paul was 'privileged' to be beheaded.

Peter: June 29, January 16. Crucified upside down.

Andrew: November 30. Crucified.

James the Son of Zebedee: April 30. Beheaded.

John the Theologian: September 26, May 8. Died in peace in a wondrous way.

Philip: November 14. Crucified.

Bartholomew: June 11, August 25. Crucified, then flayed and beheaded.

Thomas: October 6. Pierced with five spears.

Matthew the Evangelist: November 16. Burned to death.

James the Son of Alphaeus: October 9. Crucified.

Thaddeus (or Jude the brother of James): June 19. Crucified.

Simon the Zealot: May 10. Crucified.

Matthias: August 9. Stoned, then beheaded with an axe when dead.

Paul: June 29. Beheaded.

† Indicates a Saint or day whose commemoration is at least "Doxology rank" (Great Doxology sung at Matins); there is generally some dispensation from fasting when these days fall on fast days.

Assembled by John Brady. The opinions and errors contained herein are his own.
Lives are compiled mostly from: *The Synaxarion* published by Ormylia Monastery;
The *Prologue from Ochrid* by St Nikolai of Zika (Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic);
and *Great Horologion*, published by Holy Transfiguration Monastery.



