

God is Wonderful in His Saints

Orthodox Saints commemorated in May

MAY 1

† Holy Prophet Jeremiah (583 BC)

He is the author of the Old Testament book that bears his name and of the Book of Lamentations; and Baruch, his scribe and disciple, composed the Old Testament book that bears his own name. Jeremiah was the son of Helkiah, of the tribe of Levi, from the city of Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. He prophesied for thirty years, from 613 to 583 BC. When the Hebrew people were taken into captivity in the reign of Zedekiah, the Prophet remained behind and mourned the downfall of the Jerusalem: this is the origin of the book of Lamentations. The Jews who remained fled into Egypt, forcibly taking Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch with them. In Egypt, his prophecies continued to disturb his own people, who stoned him to death by in 583.

His name means "The Lord is exalted." He is ranked second among the great Prophets, after Isaiah.

The holy Prophets and Forefathers, who lived before Christ's coming in the flesh are counted as Saints of the Church because they foresaw His coming, spoke of it in their prophecies, looked forward to it with joy, and greeted Jesus as their Savior when he descended into Hades before his Resurrection.

Saint Tamara (Tamar), Queen of Georgia (1212)

'Saint Tamara was the only child of King George III. Upon his death in 1184, she became Queen at the age of twenty-four. Despite her youth, she ruled the country with such wisdom and godliness — leading it to unprecedented military triumphs over the neighboring Moslem countries in defence of her kingdom, fostering arts and letters, and zealously strengthening Orthodoxy — that her reign is known as the Golden Age of Georgia. After her coronation, she convoked a local council to correct disorders in church life. When the bishops had assembled from all parts of her kingdom, she, like Saint Constantine at the First Ecumenical Council, honoured them as if she were a commoner, and they Angels of God; exhorting them to establish righteousness and redress abuses, she said in her humility, "Do away with every wickedness, beginning with me, for the prerogative of the throne is in no wise that of making war against God." Saint Tamara called herself "the father of orphans and the judge of widows," and her contemporaries called her "King" instead of "Queen." She herself led her army against the Moslems and fearlessly defeated them; because of the reverence that even the enemies of Georgia had for her, entire mountain tribes renounced Islam and were baptized. She built countless churches and monasteries throughout her kingdom, and was a benefactress also to the Holy Land, Mount Athos, and holy places in Greece and Cyprus. she has always been much beloved by her people, who have memorialized her meekness, wisdom, piety, obedience, and peace-loving nature in innumerable legends, ballads, and songs; the poem written in her honor by Shota Rustaveli, "The Knight of the Panther Skin," is the masterpiece of Georgian literature. the great Queen Tamara departed the earthly kingdom for the heavenly in the year 1212.' (*Great Horologion*)

Synaxis of the Three New Righteous Martyrs of the Holy Mountain, Euthymius, Ignatius, and Acacius (1614-1615)

All three were monks on Mt Athos. All three had renounced Christ in their youth and embraced Islam, but had repented and pursued the Christian life with fervor. All three, at different times, returned to Constantinople and declared themselves Christians, dooming themselves to death under Islamic law. Acacius's poor and pious mother told him, 'As you voluntarily denied the Lord, so you must now voluntarily and courageously receive martyrdom for our sweet Jesus.' All three were beheaded in Constantinople. The holy relics of all three are kept at the Skete of the Venerable Forerunner on the Holy Mountain, where they had been monks.

MAY 2

Holy Martyrs Hesperus, his wife Zoë, and their sons Cyrillac and Theodulus (2nd c.)

Early in the second century a pagan named Catallus bought Hesperus, his wife Zoë, and their sons Cyrillac and Theodulus as slaves. All of them were Christians, and would not eat anything that had been sacrificed to idols — they would throw all such food to the dogs and go hungry themselves. When Catallus learned of this, he was enraged and began to torture them cruelly, beginning with the children. When none of them could be moved from his confession of Christ, the entire family was cast into a hot furnace, where they gave up their souls to God. Their bodies remained unburnt.

Holy Tsar Boris-Michael of Bulgaria (907)

A son of the Bulgarian Khan Presian, he was instructed in the faith by St Photios, Patriarch of Constantinople. He labored throughout his reign to establish and spread the Christian faith in Bulgaria. When the disciples of St Cyril and Methodius

were driven from Moravia and came to Bulgaria, he greatly assisted them in their missionary work there. He retired to a monastery, leaving rule of his country in the hands of his son Vladimir. But when he learned that Vladimir was persecuting Christians and trying to re-establish paganism, he left the monastery, took up the sword, overthrew his son, put his younger son Symeon on the throne and, when he was confident that the country was again in Christian hands, returned to the monastery, where he ended his life in peace and piety.

Translation of the Relics (1072 and 1115) of the Holy Passion-bearers Boris and Gleb, princes of Russia (1015)

For their lives, see July 24.

Translation of the Relics of St Athanasius the Great, patriarch of Alexandria

His main commemoration is January 18.

MAY 3

Martyrs Timothy the Reader and his wife Maura of Antinoe in Egypt (286)

These holy martyrs were husband and wife. During the persecutions of Diocletian, the governor Arian demanded that Timothy hand over his sacred books (these were rare at that time, and as a Reader he was entrusted with their care). Timothy refused, saying that he would no more do so than a father would hand over his own children to death. He was brutally tortured and, when he refused to yield, the governor summoned Timothy's wife Maura, thinking that she would urge her husband to bow to the idols, but instead she confessed herself to be a Christian too. She in turn was subjected to many tortures, and finally the couple were crucified facing one another, where they hung for nine days, encouraging one another in the Faith, before they met their blessed end. They had been married for less than a month when they received their crowns.

St Theodosius, abbot of the Kiev Caves Monastery and founder of cenobitic monasticism in Russia (1074).

"Our righteous Father Theodosius was born in 1009, not far from Kiev, and brought up in Kursk. From early childhood he showed the wisdom of an elder, avoiding childish games and refusing to wear anything but the poorest of clothing. When he was about thirteen years old, and his father died, he began to humble himself even more, going out to work with the serfs in the field. His mother went so far as to beat him in her attempts to make him behave more respectably. Hearing of the labours of Saint Anthony of Kiev, he fled to him secretly and was accepted by him as his disciple. He was tonsured at the age of twenty-four by Saint Anthony's disciple Nikon, and was elected Abbot of the Caves Monastery in 1057, since Saint Anthony refused this out of humility, and lived his whole life as a hermit. It was Saint Theodosius who introduced in Russia the cenobitic rule of the Monastery of Studium in Constantinople, and under his guidance many monks attained to great holiness, and the monastic life spread. When Prince Svyatoslav drove out his elder brother the pious Prince Isyaslav, and ascended to the throne of Chernigov in his place, Saint Theodosius courageously rebuked him, and continued reproving him even when threatened with exile. At the request of Prince Shimon, the son of a Varangian (Viking) prince, the Saint wrote a prayer for the nobleman's forgiveness of sins, and, at his behest, had it placed in his coffin, whence arose this custom in Russia. He reposed on May 3, 1074, being sixty-five years of age." (*Great Horologion*)

MAY 4

Our Holy Father Nikephoros the Hesychast (14th c.)

He was originally a Roman Catholic, but became Orthodox and lived in asceticism on the Holy Mountain as a monk. He was the spiritual father of St Gregory Palamas. His life was outwardly uneventful, and he reposed in peace in the 14th century. He left this very concise description of the hesychast's path:

"Gather you mind and compel it to enter into your heart and remain there. When your mind is firmly in your heart, it must not remain empty, but must incessantly make the prayer: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me!' And it must never fall silent. Through this the whole string of the virtues: love, joy, peace and the others, will make their abode in you, by which, then, every request of yours to God will be fulfilled."

Virgin-martyr Pelagia of Tarsus in Asia Minor (287)

She was born in Tarsus (home of the Apostle Paul). Though her parents were prominent pagans, she heard of Christ from Christians in that city, and her heart was filled with love for the Savior. The Emperor Diocletian visited Tarsus, and during his stay the Emperor's son and heir fell in love with Pelagia and wished to marry her. To her parents' complete amazement, Pelagia replied that she was already promised to her betrothed, Christ the Lord. She then fled her parents' house and went to the holy Bishop Linus, who instructed her in the Faith and baptized her. Pelagia then gave away all her many possessions, returned home, and told her parents that she was baptised. The Emperor's son, despairing of marrying her, killed himself. Pelagia's mother then denounced her daughter to the Emperor, who summoned her for trial. When Pelagia freely confessed her unwavering faith in Christ, the Emperor condemned her to be burned in a metal ox heated by fire. An account of her

martyrdom says that, entering the ox with prayers of thanksgiving on her lips, she instantly melted like wax. Bishop Linus, who had baptised her, found a few of her bones and buried them on a hill near Tarsus. During the reign of the Emperor Constantine Copronymus (741-775), a church was built there in her honor.

St Monica, mother of Blessed Augustine (388)

MAY 5

Great-martyr Irene of Thessalonica (4th c.)

"Saint Irene was the daughter of a princelet called Licinius; named Penelope by her parents, through a divine revelation she was brought to faith in Christ and at Baptism was renamed Irene. In her zeal for piety she broke in pieces all the idols of her father, who commanded that she be trampled underfoot by horses. But while she remained unharmed, one of the horses rose up and cast down her father, killing him. By her prayer she raised him to life again, and he believed and was baptized. Afterwards, in many journeyings, Saint Irene suffered torments and punishments for her faith, but was preserved by the power of God, while working dread miracles and converting many thousands of souls. At last she came to Ephesus, where she fell asleep in peace, in the first half of the fourth century. Two days after her death, her gravestone was found lifted off, and her grave empty. At least two churches were dedicated to St Irene in Constantinople, and she is the patroness of the Aegean island of Thera, which is commonly called Santorini, a corruption of "Saint Irene." (*Great Horologion*)

Note: The most famous Agia Irene church in Constantinople is not named after her, but for the Holy Peace (Greek *Irene*) of God, which is Christ.

The *Prologue's* account differs in several details. St Nikolai places St Irene in the Balkans in the town of Magedon, in apostolic times rather than the 3rd-4th century. In his account Irene learned the Christian faith from her teacher, Appelianus, and was baptised by the Apostle Timothy himself. He attributes the anger of Irene's father to her refusal to marry rather than her smashing the family idols (though of course she might have done both).

MAY 6

Righteous Job the Long-suffering

This icon of patient endurance in the face of all that God sends us lived near Arabia about 2,000 years before Christ. He was a descendant of Abraham through Esau. His prosperity, his calamitous sufferings, his patient endurance, and his restoration to health and riches are told in detail in the Old Testament book that bears his name.

Some say that Job endured his sufferings for seven years before being restored to health and prosperity. Others say that all his sufferings occupied one year. The holy Fathers agree that Job for lived many years after his restoration, and died when he was more than 200 years old.

St Job, abbot and wonderworker of Pochaev (1651)

"Saint Job of Pochaev was born about 1551 in southwest Galicia of a pious Orthodox family. In his tenth year the Saint departed for the Ugornitsky Monastery of our Savior in the Carpathian Mountains. Tonsured after two years, he was ordained hieromonk about 1580. Renowned for his meekness and humility, Job was invited by the great zealot for Holy Orthodoxy in Carpatho-Russia, Prince Constantine Ostrozhky, to be Abbot of the Monastery of the Cross in Dubno. In his zeal for the preservation and propagation of the Orthodox Faith, and to counteract the propaganda of the Uniates, he printed and widely disseminated Orthodox spiritual and liturgical books. About 1600 he removed to the Mountain of Pochaev where at the insistence of the brethren, he became Abbot of the Monastery of the Dormition of the Theotokos, which he enlarged and made to flourish. Through his labours, a large printing works was founded at Pochaev and greatly assisted in the nurture of the Orthodox faithful in that region. His monastery became the center of the Orthodox Church in western Ukraine. The Saint reposed, having taken the schema with the name of John, in 1651, at the advanced age of one hundred." (*Great Horologion*)

Holy Martyr Barbarus the Soldier, with Bacchus, Callimachus and Dionysius (362)

He was a soldier in the Roman army during the reign of Julian the Apostate. Like many soldiers, he was a secret Christian, serving under the Imperial commander Bacchus when his troops battled the Franks. A mighty Frankish soldier, like Goliath, challenged the Romans to send one of their company out to do single combat with him. The commander send Barbarus, who prayed to the Lord and overcame the Frankish giant, after which the Frankish army was easily vanquished. The commander then ordered a triumph in celebration of victory, including a public sacrifice to the Roman idols. At the sacrifice, the commander noticed that Barbarus was standing aside and asked him why: Barbarus revealed that he was a Christian and could not make sacrifice to the idols. The commander reported this to the unbelieving Emperor, who ordered that Barbarus be put to torture. Barbarus endured many cruel torments with serenity and courage. During his tortures, many wonders were seen, and many of his fellow-soldiers embraced the Christian faith. Three of these were Bacchus, Barbarus'

commander; Callimachus; and Dionysius. All three were beheaded for confessing Christ, then Barbarus himself attained the Martyr's crown through beheading.

MAY 7

† Commemoration of the Apparition of the Sign of the Precious Cross over Jerusalem in 351 AD

On this day in 351, during the reign of Constantius, son of Constantine the Great, the sign of the Cross appeared over Jerusalem. Cyril, Patriarch of Jerusalem, wrote "At about the third hour of the day [mid-morning] an enormous cross, formed of light, appeared in the heaven above holy Golgotha and reaching to the holy Mount of Olives, being seen not by one or two only, but manifest with perfect clarity to the whole multitude of the city; not, as one might suppose, rushing swiftly past in fancy, but seen openly above the earth many hours in plain sight, and overcoming the beams of the sun with its dazzling rays."

Our Holy Fathers of Georgia (6th c.)

"In the sixth century, two hundred years after St Nina had preached the Gospel in Georgia, the most holy Mother of God appeared to John, an ascetic of Antioch, and commanded him to choose twelve of his disciples and go to Georgia, to strengthen the Orthodox faith there. John did so. Reaching Georgia, these twelve missionaries were formally welcomed by the prince of that country and the Catholicos, Eulalius, and immediately began their work with great zeal. The people gathered around them in hordes, and they strengthened them in the Faith with great wisdom and many miracles. The chief of these Christ-loving missionaries was St John of Zedan, and the names of the others were: Abidus, Antony, David, Zeno, Thaddeus, Jesse, Isderius, Joseph, Michael, Pyrrus, Stephen and Shio. With apostolic zeal, they all strengthened the Christian faith in Georgia, founded many monasteries and left many disciples to follow them. thus they became worthy of glory in heaven and power on earth" (*Prologue*)

Martyr Acacius the Centurion at Byzantium (303)

He was an officer in the Roman army during the reign of the Emperor Maximian, and a Christian from his childhood. Summoned before the judges, he said that he had inherited a steadfast faith from his parents, and that he would not waver in it, having seen his faith confirmed many times in the miracles worked by the relics of the Saints. He courageously endured torture in Pyrrinthus of Thrace, then was taken to Byzantium where, after further cruel tortures, he was beheaded.

St Alexis Toth of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania (1909) (April 24 OC)

This light of Orthodoxy in North America was born in Austro-Hungary in 1854, to poor Carpatho-Russian parents. His father was a priest in the Eastern-rite Roman Catholic church and, following in his father's footsteps, he was ordained in 1878. In 1889 he was appointed to serve as pastor to a Uniate parish in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Prompted partly by the strong hostility of the American Roman Catholic hierarchy at that time to Eastern-rite practices, he convened a meeting of about ten Eastern-rite priests in Wilkes-Barre Pennsylvania, where the divinely-led decision was made to seek to return to the Orthodox faith. Fr Alexis contacted Bishop Vladimir of the Russian church in San Francisco, who, in 1891, received Fr Alexis and 361 of his parishioners back into the faith of their ancestors.

From that time forward, Fr Alexis worked tirelessly, at great personal sacrifice, to proclaim the truths of the Orthodox faith, especially to those still attached to its mimic, Byzantine Catholicism. For long periods of time he received little or no salary and (despite claims that he had embraced Orthodoxy to enrich himself) worked in a bakery to support himself. Through his work, thousands of Christians in North America were led into the fullness of the Orthodox Faith during his lifetime.

St Alexis reposed in 1909; He was officially glorified in 1994. his holy relics can be venerated at St Tikhon's Monastery in South Canaan, Pennsylvania.

MAY 8

† Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian

The Apostle's main commemoration is September 26. Today is commemorated a miracle that took place at his grave every year on this date in Ephesus.

The Apostle reposed when he was more than one hundred years old; he was the only one of the Apostles not to die a martyr. Knowing that his death approached, he took seven of his disciples and told them to dig a grave in the form of a cross. He then lay down in the grave and died, and was buried by his disciples. When the faithful later opened his grave, they found it to be empty. But on this date every year a fine powder, called *manna* by the people, poured forth from the grave, and was used by the faithful for healing of ailments of body and soul.

Our Righteous Father Arsenios the Great (449)

He is one of the original and most honored Desert Fathers. Born of a noble family, he was a deacon and a courtier in

Constantinople. One day he heard a voice saying "Arsenios, flee from men, and thou shalt be saved." He left the capital in secret and sailed to Alexandria, then journeyed to Skete in the Egyptian desert, where he became a monk. For years he was the disciple of St John the Dwarf. Even though he had already abandoned the world so dramatically, after some time in the desert he again heard a voice saying, "Arsenios, flee, be silent, pray always, for these are the causes of sinning not." He then separated himself from his brother monks and lived as a hermit, practicing silence. It was told of him that, on Saturday evenings, he would stand, turn his back to the setting sun, raise his hands in prayer, and pray without sitting down until the sun shone on his face the following morning. A monk who came to visit him looked into his cell and saw Arsenios at prayer; his entire body glowing like a flame. He reposed in peace at the age of ninety-five.

St Emilia (375), mother of Sts Macrina, Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa, Peter of Sebaste, and Theosevia

She bore nine children, and imparted her Christian faith so effectively that five of them are counted as Saints of the Church: Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Peter of Sebaste, Macrina and Theosevia. In her old age she founded a monastery, and lived in it with her daughter Macrina until her repose.

MAY 9

† Translation of the relics of St Nicholas the Wonderworker from Myra to Bari (1087)

In 1087 the Saint's relics were taken from Myra in Lycia (on the southern coast of present-day Turkey) to the town of Bari in Italy. This was done due to a Muslim attack on Lycia. At that time Bari was Orthodox and under the administration of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The Saint's relics now lie in a Roman Catholic church in Bari; each year the casket containing the relics is opened by a Roman Catholic and Orthodox bishop together, and quantities of fragrant myrrh are removed, for the healing and encouragement of the faithful.

H prophet Isaiah (7th c. BC)

He is counted as the greatest of the Old Testament Prophets. His incomparably beautiful verses foretell Christ in many places. He chastised, comforted, and counseled the pious king Hezekiah; but when he denounced the impiety and lawlessness of Hezekiah's son Manasseh, he was sawn in two outside Jerusalem, receiving a martyr's crown. His name means "The Lord is helper."

The Fifth Biblical Ode, "Out of the night my spirit waketh at dawn unto Thee, O God..." is taken from Isaiah.

Holy Martyr Christopher (3rd c.)

He was originally named Reprobis. In the time of the persecutions under the Emperor Decius, Reprobis, seeing the sufferings of the Christians, rebuked the rulers for their cruelty. The governor sent soldiers to arrest him, but he converted them and was baptised along with them, receiving the name Christopher. After he was brought before the governor, he was imprisoned with two harlots sent to seduce him, but he converted them also. He, the soldiers, and the former harlots were subjected to torture and finally beheaded.

It is this Saint Christopher who is portrayed on the medals often worn for protection in the Latin West. The image of him carrying the child Jesus comes from his name, which means 'Christ-bearer,' not from any incident in his life.

MAY 10

† Apostle Simon Zelotes

He was one of the Twelve. He was born in Cana of Galilee; some accounts say that he was the bridegroom at the wedding at Cana, where the Lord Jesus performed his first sign (John ch. 2). After receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, he preached the Gospel in Africa; he was privileged to die by crucifixion, like his Lord.

Holy Martyrs Alphaeus, Philadelphus and Cyprianus of Sicily (251)

They were brothers living in southern Italy, of noble family and devout faith in Christ. (They were the sons of Vitalius, a pagan governor.) Arrested for their confession of Christ, they were taken before a series of judges, subjected to torture each time. Finally they were taken to Sicily and tortured to death there, during the reign of Licinius. Their incorrupt relics were found in 1517. They once appeared in a vision to St Euthalia (March 2).

St Isidora the Fool of Tabenna (Egypt) (4th c.)

She was a nun in a monastery in Egypt, and pretended madness and mental weakness in order to hide her virtues and her ascetic life. She did the dirtiest jobs, lived on scraps from the nuns' tables, and was despised by her sisters. An angel appeared to the ascetic Pishim and revealed Isidora's true sanctity to him. He came to the monastery and, seeing Isidora, prostrated himself before her, at which she prostrated before him. When the sisters told him that she was mad, he answered "It is you who are mad: she is greater before God than either you or me. I only beg God to give me also that which is destined for her at the dreadful Judgement." At this, the sisters' eyes were opened, and they began to treat Isidora with honor. But she, to avoid being honored by anyone, fled the monastery and was not heard from again.

Blessed Thais (Thaisia) of Egypt (4th c.)

"Thais was a rich maiden, a Christian in Egypt. She decided not to marry, but to give her possessions to the hermit monks. But, when she had given away all her goods, she gave herself to a life of debauchery. Hearing of this, the hermits begged Abba John the Dwarf to do something, and he went to Alexandria and began to weep in Thais' hearing. When she heard the old man weeping for her sins, she repented at once, left her house and everything she had and went into the desert after the saint. One night when she was sleeping and John was standing in prayer, he saw an angel in a nimbus of light coming down to take Thais' soul. And John saw that her sudden but deep repentance was more pleasing to God than the years-long but shallow repentance of many of the hermits." (*Prologue*)

MAY 11

† Holy Equals-to-the-Apostles Methodius (885) and Cyril (869), first teachers of the Slavs

The two saints were brothers, born in Thessalonica. St Methodius, the elder brother, served as a soldier for ten years before becoming a monk. Cyril was librarian at the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople; then he too became a monk.

Their first missionary work was not among the Slavs: When the king of the Khazars (a Mongol people who then inhabited much of what is now Russia) petitioned the Emperor Michael to send teachers to instruct his people, the Emperor chose Cyril and Methodius as his emissaries. They converted the Khazar king to the Christian faith, along with many of his nobles and commoners.

When King Rostislav of Moravia likewise sought teachers of the Christian faith, Cyril and Methodius were again sent forth. This time they devised an alphabet for the Slavic language (based on Greek but adding characters to indicate sounds particular to Slavonic), and used it to translate many of the Greek service books into the language of the people. (In theory, the Orthodox people have always been privileged to hear the Church's services in their own tongue, though often attachment to dead languages has prevented this ideal from becoming reality.) Both brothers were repeatedly attacked by Germanic priests of the region, who opposed the use of the common tongue in the liturgy. At different times, both brothers were forced to appeal for exoneration and protection to the Pope of Rome, who supported them warmly each time.

After the two Saints reposed, attacks on their work continued, and their disciples were eventually driven from Moravia. The disciples, fleeing southward, found a warmer welcome among the southern Slavic peoples, and their work bore much fruit in Bulgaria (including modern-day Serbia) and other countries. And, of course, the alphabet that they devised, called Cyrillic after St Cyril, remains the standard alphabet of both the Slavonic service books of the Church and the Slavic languages of today.

† Holy Hieromartyr Mocius (288? 295?)

"The holy Hieromartyr Mocius, who was of Roman parents, lived during the reign of Diocletian, and was a priest in Amphilopolis of Thrace. One day as the idolaters were assembled, and the Proconsul Laodicius was offering sacrifice to Dionysius, Mocius entered the temple and overturned the altar. After many torments, through which he was preserved whole by grace divine, he was sent to Byzantium, where he was beheaded about the year 288. Saint Constantine the Great built a magnificent church in honour of Saint Mocius in Constantinople, where his holy relics were enshrined. He is one of the Holy Unmercenarys." (*Great Horologion*)

The *Prologue* and *St Herman Calendar* give the date of his repose as 295.

MAY 12

† Our Fathers among the Saints Epiphanius, bishop of Cyprus (403) and Germanos, Archbishop of Constantinople (740)

Saint Epiphanius was born a Jew in Palestine, but he and his sister came to faith in Christ and were baptized together. Epiphanius gave all his possessions to the poor and became a monk. He knew St Hilarion the great (October 31), and traveled among the monks of Egypt to learn their ways and wisdom. The fame of his virtue spread so widely that several attempts were made to make him bishop, first in Egypt, then in Cyprus. Whenever Epiphanius heard of these plans, he fled the area. He was finally made bishop by means of a storm: told to go to Cyprus, he took ship instead for Gaza, but a contrary wind blew his ship directly to Cyprus, where "Epiphanius fell into the hands of bishops who had come together to elect a successor to the newly-departed Bishop of Constantia, and the venerable Epiphanius was at last constrained to be consecrated, about the year 367." (*Great Horologion*). He guarded his flock faithfully for the remainder of his life, working many miracles, defending the Church against the Arian heresy, and composing several books, of which the best-loved is the *Panarion* (from the Latin for 'bread-box'), an exposition of the Faith and an examination of eighty heresies. He was sometimes called the 'Five-tongued' because he was fluent in Hebrew, Egyptian, Syriac, Greek, and Latin.

Saint Germanos was the son of a prominent family, in Constantinople. He became Metropolitan of Cyzicus, then was elevated to the throne at Constantinople in 715. It was he who baptized the infant Constantine, who for his whole life was

nicknamed "Copronymos" because he defecated in the baptismal font (though he was neither the first nor the last infant to do so). At this incident, Patriarch Germanos is said to have prophesied that the child would one day bring some foul heresy upon the Church, which he did, becoming a notorious iconoclast as emperor. Germanos openly opposed the decree of the Emperor Leo the Isaurian which began the persecution of the holy icons. For this he was deposed and driven into exile in 730. He lived the rest of his life in peace. Saint Germanos is the composer of many of the Church's hymns, notably those for the Feast of the Meeting in the Temple.

These two Saints are always commemorated together.

MAY 13

Holy Virgin-martyr Glykeria at Heraclea (141).

At a pagan festival in Thrace, when the Governor of the region was offering sacrifice to the idols, St Glyceria entered the temple and declared herself to be a handmaid of Christ. When the governor commanded her to make sacrifice to the gods, she overturned the statue of Zeus, smashing it to pieces. For this, and for her continued refusal to deny her faith, she was seized and subjected to many tortures. First, the governor had her sealed in a prison cell with the intention of starving her to death; but an angel appeared to Glykeria and gave her heavenly food. When enough time had passed that the governor was certain that Glykeria had perished, he opened her cell, and all present were astonished to see her alive, healthy and full of joy. At this her jailer, Laodicius, confessed Christ and was beheaded. Glykeria was then thrown into a fire, but stood in it unharmed, praising God like the Three Children in Babylon. Finally she was cast to wild beasts, where she gave up her soul to God. A healing myrrh flowed from her relics.

Holy Martyr Alexander of Rome (298)

He was an eighteen-year-old soldier in the army of the Emperor Maximian. When a public sacrifice was made to the Roman idols, Alexander refused to take part, for which he was brought before the Captain Tiberian, who told him he must either deny Christ or die. When he stood fast for Christ, he was arrested and taken through Macedonia to Byzantium, being cruelly tortured at every stop along the way. But everywhere he went, the Christians flocked to him, encouraging him and asking his blessing. His mother, Pimenia, travelled with him for the entire journey. In all his sufferings, Alexander was visited many times by an angel of God, who relieved his pain and encouraged him. As his Lord had commanded, Alexander loved and prayed for his enemies: At a place called Carasura, when the soldiers guarding him were suffering from thirst, he prayed, and a spring of cold water burst out of a dry place.

Finally, on the bank of the river Ergina, Tiberian ordered that Alexander be beheaded. As the executioner raised his sword, he saw radiant angels of God all around the holy Martyr, and was afraid to strike. Alexander asked the executioner why he had stayed his hand and, hearing the answer, prayed to God that he might send the angels away so that the executioner would not be afraid. The angels vanished, and Alexander received his crown of martyrdom. Pimenia, his mother, buried her son's body, and many miracles of healing were worked at his grave. Some time later, Alexander appeared to his mother and told her of her approaching death, which occurred not long afterward.

MAY 14

Martyr Isidore of Chios (251)

A devout Christian from his early youth, he was kidnapped from his native Chios and impressed into the army. When he openly confessed himself a Christian, his commander ordered him to make sacrifice to the gods. When he resolutely refused, the commander ordered him to be beaten with iron flails, then had his tongue cut out. But even without a tongue, Isidore was miraculously enabled to speak, and clearly proclaimed the name of Christ. At the same moment, the commander was struck mute. The commander then ordered by signs that Isidore be beheaded. Isidore went to his death rejoicing and praising God. This occurred during the persecutions of the Emperor Decius.

Our Holy Father Serapion the Sindonite (5th c.)

"Sindon" means 'linen cloth,' and this saint was called 'the Sindonite' because he covered his naked body only with a linen cloth. He carried the Gospels in his hand. Serapion lived like the birds, with no roof and no cares, moving from one place to another. He gave his linen cloth to a poor wretch who was shivering with cold, and himself remained completely naked. When someone asked him: 'Serapion, who made you naked?', he indicated the Gospels and said: 'This!' But, after that, he gave away the Gospels also for the money needed by a man who was being hounded to prison by a creditor in debt. [note: Gospel books were all hand-written, and were uncommon and valuable.] At one time in Athens, he did not eat for four days, having nothing, and began to cry out with hunger. When the Athenian philosophers asked him what he was shouting about, he replied: 'That were three to whom I was in debt: two have quietened down, but the third is still tormenting me. The first creditor is carnal lust, who has tormented me from my youth; the second is love of money, and the third is the stomach. The

first two have left me alone, but the third one still torments me.' The philosophers gave him some gold to buy bread. He went to a baker, bought a single loaf, put down all the gold and went out. He went peacefully to the Lord in old age, in the 5th century." (*Prologue*)

Blessed Isidore the Fool for Christ (1484)

He was German by birth but, drawn to the Orthodox faith, he moved to Rostov and not only became Orthodox, but took on the podvig of folly for Christ. He lived in complete destitution, spending the days pretending madness and the nights in prayer. Many wonders were performed by this Saint even in his lifetime. When he died in his meager hut in 1484, the people of Rostov smelled a fragrant odor throughout the city. A merchant whom he had miraculously saved from drowning built a church in the place where his hut had stood.

MAY 15

† St Pachomius the Great, founder of cenobitic monasticism (346)

His name in his native Coptic, *Pachom*, means "eagle." He was an Egyptian pagan who entered the Roman army at a young age. While quartered at Thebes, he was amazed at the kindness of the local Christians, who brought food and drink to the soldiers. Learning who they were, he believed in Christ and vowed, once released from the army, to serve him for the rest of his life. At the end of his military service, he was baptised and became the disciple of the hermit Palamon, with whom he lived for ten years.

At a place called Tabennisis an angel appeared to him dressed in the robes of a monk and gave him a tablet on which was written a rule for a cenobitic monastery — one in which the brethren live communally rather than as hermits, something that had not been seen before among Christians. The angel commanded him to found such a monastery. Pachomius set to work, building many cells though there was no one to live there but himself and his brother John. When John questioned the unnecessary building, Pachomius only said that he was following God's command, without saying who would live there or when.

But soon men began to assemble there, and in time so many came to be his disciples that he eventually founded nine monasteries housing thousands of monks. The rule that he gave (or had been given) for these monasteries became the model for all communal Christian monasticism thereafter. St Pachomius reposed in 346, before his great Egyptian fellow-strugglers St Anthony the Great and St Athanasius the Great.

Entertaining angels unawares: Christian believers' simple acts of kindness toward their pagan oppressors may have seemed foolish to many, but it was such acts that opened the eyes of Pachomius to the light of Christ, and which bore incalculably great fruit: the founding of the monastic life which is still the backbone of Christ's Church.

Our Father among the Saints Achillius, Bishop of Larissa (330)

He was born in Cappadocia, and was one of the 318 God-bearing Fathers who attended the First Ecumenical Council. At the council, Achillius took up a stone and said to the Arians, 'If Christ is a creature of God, as you say, tell oil to flow from this stone.' When the heretics kept silent, Achilleus went on, 'And if the Son of God is equal to the Father, as we believe, let oil flow from this stone,' at which oil flowed out. Returning to Larissa, the holy bishop cast down many pagan temples, built many churches, cast out many demons, and reposed in peace.

MAY 16

Our Holy Father Theodore the Sanctified (368), disciple of St Pachomius the Great

He was born and raised an unbeliever, but came to faith in Christ as a young man. Not long after being baptised, he heard of Pachomius (May 15) and fled to join him in the desert. Saint Pachomius accepted Theodore as a monk and, because of his humility and obedience, came to esteem him most highly of all the brethren. Theodore's sister joined him in the desert, taking up life in a women's monastery and becoming its abbess. When their mother came to bring them back from the desert, she in turn was persuaded to stay in the women's monastery as a monastic. Finally, Theodore's brother Paphnutius also came to the monastery and was tonsured.

Once the Bishop of Panopolis asked Saint Pachomius to build a monastery for him; Pachomius entrusted Theodore to carry out the work. Some of the brethren grumbled at the authority given to Theodore, for he was younger than many of them; but St Pachomius said: 'Theodore and I fulfill the same service for God; and he also has the authority to give orders as father.' When St Pachomius reposed, he left St Theodore to be spiritual father to the monasteries that he had founded, a task which he faithfully fulfilled until his death at a great age.

St Nicholas Mystikos, Patriarch of Constantinople (930)

He was known for the purity and austerity of his life. When the Emperor Leo VI married a fourth time (his three previous wives having died), the Patriarch barred him from the church. The Emperor sent the Patriarch into exile and had his

marriage approved by delegates of the Roman Pope. When the Emperor died, Nicholas was restored to the Patriarchal throne, and called a Council in 925, at which fourth marriages were forbidden in the Church under any circumstance. He died peacefully.

The title *Mystikos* was given to some high-ranking members of the Imperial council (perhaps because they met in secret). The Patriarch was a courtier with this title before he forsook the world and was tonsured a monk.

Note: From early times, the Eastern and Latin churches have differed in their views on marriage. The Latin church held, and still holds, that marriage is dissolved by death, so in theory any number of re-marriages is permissible (a view that the Emperor Leo sought to exploit). The Eastern Church has traditionally been uncomfortable with any second marriage — some of the Fathers even call the re-marriage of widows or widowers "bigamy". Still the Eastern church tolerates re-marriage (even after divorce) as a concession for the salvation of those who cannot sustain the single state.

Blessed Musa the Maiden (5th c.)

"St Gregory the Dialogist relates of her that she was a mere nine years old when the most holy Mother of God appeared to her on two occasions, surrounded by virgins bathed in light. When Musa expressed her desire to be included in the resplendent company of the Queen of heaven, the Mother of God told her that she would come for her and take her within a month, outlining for her how she should spend those thirty days. On the twenty-fifth day, Musa took to her bed and on the thirtieth day the most pure and holy Mother again appeared to her, calling to her in a quiet voice, to which Musa replied: 'Here I am waiting, my Lady! I'm ready!', and she breathed forth her spirit. she passed from this life to life eternal in the fifth century." (Prologue)

St Brendan the Voyager, abbot of Clonfert (~577)

He was born around 484 at Tralee in Kerry, Ireland. He founded several monasteries in Ireland, of which the chief was Cluain Ferta Brennaind (anglicized as Clonfert) in County Galway. His missionary and pastoral travels took him on voyages to the Scottish islands, and possibly to Wales; thus in his own time he was known as 'Brendan the Voyager.' He reposed in peace.

Early in the ninth century, a Latin saga, *Navigatio Brendani* (The Voyage of Brendan) made him the hero of a Christian adventure that included voyages to unknown lands far to the west of Ireland. The account provides strong evidence that Irish voyagers visited America as early as the 8th century, before the Vikings; but whether St Brendan himself made these voyages is disputed.

MAY 17

Apostles Andronicus of the Seventy and his fellow-laborer Junia

Andronicus is counted as one of the Seventy. He and his fellow-worker Junia are mentioned by St Paul in his Epistle to the Romans: "Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and fellow prisoners, who are of note among the Apostles, who also were in Christ before me" (Romans 16:7). Some, troubled that a woman is mentioned as an Apostle, have attempted to translate "Junia" as "Junias," a man's name; but the Fathers are united in treating her as "Junia." It may be that they were husband and wife, like Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18), but the ancient witnesses do not tell us.

Andronicus became Bishop of Pannonia, but did not stay in one place, instead travelling throughout the world to proclaim the Gospel. Both Andronicus and Junia were granted the gift of wonder-working. Both of them suffered for Christ and were finally martyred.

Holy Martyr Solochon (298)

He was a Roman soldier, Egyptian by birth, during the reign of the Emperor Maximian. When Solochon refused an imperial command that all soldiers offer sacrifice to the idols, he was arrested along with two friends and fellow-Christians, Pamphamir and Pamphylon. All three were put to harsh torture, under which Solochon's two friends died. The commander ordered that Solochon's mouth be pried open with a sword, so that he could be force-fed food sacrificed to idols; but the Saint broke the blade with his teeth. After further torture he was left to die. Christians took him to the home of a widow, where he recovered somewhat and counseled the faithful to hold firm in their faith under torture and persecution. Soon afterward, he reposed, giving thanks to God.

MAY 18

Martyr Theodotus of Ancyra and seven virgin-martyrs with him (303)

Theodotus was a married inn-keeper in Ancyra during the persecutions of Diocletian. He used his inn-keeping trade as a means of secretly helping the persecuted Christians, many of whom used his inn as a refuge in time of need. One of his holy works was to retrieve the bodies of martyred Christians and give them burial. At that time, seven maidens were tried and tortured for their faith in Christ, then killed by being thrown into a lake. One of them, St Tecusa, appeared to St Theodotus

and asked him to retrieve the bodies of her and her sisters in Christ. Under cover of night Theodotus, guided by an Angel, was able to find all seven bodies and bury them honorably. But a friend whom he had asked to help him in this work betrayed him, and he was arrested and subjected to cruel tortures. Finally he was sentenced to be beheaded. As he went to the block, he said to the many Christians who had gathered to weep for him: 'Do not weep for me, brethren, but glorify our Lord Jesus Christ, by whose aid I am finishing my course and overcoming the enemy.' A church dedicated to him was later built on the site of his burial.

Holy Martyrs Peter, Dionysius, Christina, Andrew, Paul, Benedimus, Paulinus, and Heraclius (250)

"These Saints all contested in martyrdom during the reign of Decius (249-251). Peter was from Lampsacus in the Hellespont. For refusing to offer sacrifice to the idol of Aphrodite, his whole body was crushed and broken with chains and pieces of wood on a torture-wheel; having endured this torment courageously, he gave up his soul.

"Paul and Andrew were soldiers from Mesopotamia brought to Athens with their governor; there they were put in charge of two captive Christians, Dionysius and Christina. The soldiers, seeing the beauty of the virgin Christina, attempted to move her to commit sin with them, but she refused and, by her admonitions, brought them to faith in Christ. They and Dionysius were stoned to death, and Christina was beheaded.

"Heraclius, Paulinus, and Benedimus were Athenians, and preachers of the Gospel who turned many of the heathen from their error to the light of Christ. Brought before the governor, they confessed their Faith, and after many torments were beheaded." (*Great Horologion*)

The *Prologue* adds: "One Nicomachus, who was tortured with them, denied Christ under torture, and instantly lost his mind, tearing at his body with his teeth and foaming at the mouth until he breathed his last."

MAY 19

Hieromartyr Patrick, bishop of Prusa, and three priests with him (3rd c?)

'Saint Patrick was Bishop of Prusa, a city in Bythinia (the present-day Brusa or Bursa). Because of his Christian faith, he was brought before Julius (of Julian) the Consul, who in his attempts to persuade Patrick to worship as he himself did, declared that thanks was owed to the gods for providing the hot springs welling up from the earth for the benefit of men. Saint Patrick answered that thanks for this was owed to our Lord Jesus Christ, and explained that when He, Who is God, created the earth, He made it with both fire and water, and the fire under the earth heats the water which wells up, producing hot springs; he then explained that there is another fire, which awaits the ungodly. Because of this, he was cast into the hot springs, but it was the soldiers who cast him in, and not he, who were harmed by the hot water. After this St Patrick was beheaded with the presbyters Acacius, Menander, and Polyaenus. Most likely this was during the reign of Diocletian (284-305).' (*Great Horologion*)

MAY 20

Martyr Thalelaeus at Aegae in Cilicia and those with him (327)

The holy Thalelaeus is counted as one of the Unmercenary Physicians. He was a physician, born in Lebanon to a Berucius (a bishop) and Romylia. During the persecutions by the Emperor Numerian, he fled to Cilicia, but was captured and brought before Theodore, the governor. When Thalelaeus boldly confessed Christ, the cruel governor ordered two soldiers, Asterius and Asterius, to bore holes through his leg-bones, pass a rope through them, and hang him from a tree. But the executioners, by the power of God, were momentarily deprived of their wits and bored through a wooden plank instead, which they hung in the tree. The governor angrily ordered that the soldiers be flogged; during their flogging they cried out: 'The Lord is alive to us; from now on, we are become Christians. We believe in Christ, and suffer for Him.' Hearing these words, the governor ordered that both be beheaded. He then seized their awl and attempted to bore through Thalelaeus' legs himself; but his hand suddenly became paralyzed. The compassionate physician prayed to Christ and healed his persecutor's hand. His heart still hardened, the governor next ordered that the Saint be thrown into water and drowned; but he survived. Next he was thrown to wild beasts, but they licked his feet and rubbed tamely against him. Finally the holy Martyr was beheaded.

Our Father among the Saints Alexis, Metropolitan of Moscow (1378)

He was born in Moscow in 1292. In 1354 he was ordained Metropolitan of Moscow by Philotheus, Patriarch of Constantinople. He founded several monasteries, including the first women's monastery in Moscow. He translated the Holy Gospel from Greek into Slavonic. At that time Russia was under the rule of the Tartars, and St Alexis twice visited the Tartar Khan to plead with him to ease the oppression of the Russian people. On one of these visits he healed Taidula, the Khan's wife. He founded the Chudov Monastery in Moscow on land given him by the Khan and his wife in thanksgiving for this miraculous healing; the Saint's relics are enshrined at this same monastery. This is the feast of the uncovering of his holy relics in 1431.

MAY 21

† Holy Equals-to-the-Apostles Emperor Constantine (337) and Helen, his mother (327)

Saint Constantine was born in 272, the son of Constantius Chlorus, ruler of the western part of the Roman Empire, and St Helen. When his father died in 306 he was proclaimed successor to the throne. The empire was ruled at that time by several Caesars, each with his own territory. When Constantine learned that the Caesars Maxentius and Maximinus had joined against him, he marched on Italy. It was there that, on the eve of a decisive battle outside Rome, he saw in the sky a radiant Cross with the words "In this sign conquer." He ordered that a battle-standard be made bearing the image of a cross and inscribed with the Name of Jesus Christ. The following day he and his forces attacked and won a spectacular victory. He entered Rome in triumph and in 312 was proclaimed "Emperor of the West" by the Senate. (His brother-in-law Licinius ruled in the East.) Soon thereafter he issued his "Edict of Milan," whereby Christianity was officially tolerated for the first time, and persecution of Christians ceased. (Many believe, mistakenly, that the Edict made Christianity the only legal religion; in fact, it proclaimed freedom of religion throughout the Empire).

Licinius, though he pretended to accept the Edict, soon began persecuting Christians in his domain. In response, Constantine fought and defeated him in 324, becoming sole Emperor of the entire Roman Empire. In 324 he laid the foundations of a new capital in the town of Byzantium; in 330 he inaugurated the new capital city, naming it "New Rome" and "Constantinople." In 325 he called the First Ecumenical Council at Nicea, attending its sessions himself. Shortly before his repose in 337, he received Holy Baptism; he died on Holy Pentecost, at the age of sixty-five, and was interred in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople.

St Constantine's holy mother *Helen*, in her role as "Augusta" of the Empire, founded countless churches. She traveled to Jerusalem and found the True Cross on which the Lord was crucified. In the Holy Land she established churches at the sites of Christ's Nativity and burial, which still stand today in much-modified form. She died at about eighty years of age.

Holy New Martyr Pachomius (1730)

Born in a village of Little Russia (now Belarus), he was kidnapped as a boy and sold to a Turkish tanner as a slave. He spent the next twenty-seven years in Usaki in Asia Minor, where he was forced to embrace Islam. After long years of servitude he escaped and, reclaiming his Christianity, went to the Holy Mountain, became a monk and lived for twelve years. Tormented by his former apostasy, he determined to suffer martyrdom for Christ. With the permission of his elder, Joseph, he returned to Usaki and showed himself to his former owner wearing his monastic habit. He was tortured, thrown into prison, and finally beheaded on Ascension Day of 1730. His relics are being buried on the island of Patmos in the Church of St John the Theologian, where they work many miracles.

MAY 22

Hieromartyr Basiliscus of Comana (308)

He was from Amasea on the Black Sea, and was a nephew of St Theodore the Tyro (February 17). He was a fellow-martyr of Eutropius and Cleonicus (March 3), but is commemorated because, after they were crucified, he was shut in prison. A new governor replaced the one who had killed Basiliscus' companions, and Basiliscus prayed in tears that he not be deprived of a martyr's death. The Lord Jesus appeared to him, promised that his prayer would be answered, and told him to go to his village to say farewell to his mother and brothers. The new governor, Agrippa, sent soldiers to the village and had Basiliscus brought back to him. On the way to Amasea, many wonders were worked through the Saint, and many were brought to Christ. Brought before the governor, Basiliscus again refused to worship the idols or deny Christ: he was beheaded in Comana and his body thrown into the river. Upon the holy Saint's execution, the Agrippa instantly went mad, remaining so until he smeared himself with some of the Martyr's blood, which immediately healed him. Convinced by this wonder of the truth of the Faith, Agrippa was baptised. All of this happened during the reign of Diocletian.

Righteous Melchizedek, King of Salem.

He was a "priest of the most high God" (Genesis 14:18-20), who blessed our Forefather Abraham and "brought forth bread and wine," prefiguring the Holy Eucharist, centuries before the Law was given to Moses or Christ became incarnate. The Epistle to the Hebrews (ch. 7) reveals Melchizedek, the Priest-King, to be a type of Christ.

Commemoration of the Second Ecumenical Council (381).

The council was called by the Emperor Theodosius the Great, primarily to clarify the Church's teaching on the Holy Spirit. Macedonius, bishop of Constantinople, had falsely taught that the Spirit is a creature rather than a Divine Person "Who together with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified." Partly to correct this error, the council revised and expanded the text of the Nicene Creed into the form that we know today.

MAY 23

St Michael the Confessor, bishop of Synnada (818)

"This Saint was from Synnada in Phrygia of Asia Minor. In Constantinople he met Saint Theophylact (March 8); the holy Patriarch Tarasius, learning that Michael and Theophylact desired to become monks, sent them to a monastery on the Black Sea. Because of their great virtue, St Tarasius afterwards compelled them to accept consecration, Theophylact as Bishop of Nicomedia, and Michael as Bishop of his native Synnada. Because St Michael fearlessly confessed the veneration of the holy icons, he was banished by the Iconoclast Emperor Leo V the Armenian, who reigned from 813 to 820. After being driven from one place to another, in many hardships and bitter pains, St Michael died in exile." (*Great Horologion*)

Holy Myrrh-bearer Mary, wife of Cleopas**Holy Martyr Michael of St Sabbas' Monastery (9th c.)**

When his parents died, the young Michael gave away all his goods and travelled to Jerusalem, where he entered the monastery of St Sabbas the Sanctified. Once he was sent into town to sell some handwork for the monastery. A eunuch of an Arab princess met him in the street and brought him to princess' home to show his wares. (Jerusalem was ruled by Muslim Arabs at that time.) The princess, like Potiphar's wife, conceived an illicit passion for the young monk and invited him to her bed. When he refused, the angry princess had him beaten and taken to the Sultan, where she accused him of blasphemy against Mohammed. The Sultan tried to make him accept Islam, but he refused. When a dose of poison had no effect on the holy Michael, the Sultan had him publicly beheaded in the center of Jerusalem. The monks retrieved his body and gave it honorable burial at his monastery.

Holy Virgin Euphrosyne, Princess of Polotsk (1173)

"She was the daughter of Prince Vseslav of Polotsk. When her parents wished her to be married, she ran away to a monastery and became a nun. An angel of the Lord appeared to her three times to show her the place where she was to build a new monastery for virgins. She brought her own sister, Evdokia, into monasticism and many other young girls from the ranks of the aristocracy. One kinswoman of hers, Zvenislava, a princess of Borisov, brought all her wealth, clothing and precious jewels, and said: 'I count all the beauty of this world as naught, and wish to give these fine things, prepared for my marriage, to the Church of the Saviour. And I desire to espouse myself to Him in a spiritual marriage, and to bow my head beneath His easy and light yoke.' Euphrosyne professed her too, and gave her the name Evpraxia. In old age, Euphrosyne evinced a desire to die in Jerusalem, and prayed for this boon. God heard her prayer, and she did indeed die in the monastery of St Theodosius in Jerusalem on May 23rd, 1173, during a visit there." (*Prologue*)

MAY 24**† St Symeon Stylites (the Younger) of the Wonderful Mountain (595)**

He was born in Antioch in 522. His father, John, died in an earthquake, leaving him to be raised by his mother Martha. From his earliest childhood he lived a very ascetic life and was under special protection and guidance of St John the Baptist, who often appeared to him. He became a monk as a young man and, after a vision of the Lord, who appeared to him as a handsome youth and filled his heart to overflowing with love for Christ, he ascended onto a pillar, where he stayed for eighteen years, praying and singing psalms. He then went to the mountain called 'Wonderful', where he lived alone in a barren place for ten years; he then ascended another pillar, where he remained in extreme hardship for forty-five years. During this time he became known as a wonder-worker and visionary: the *Prologue* says "The measure of his love for God was such that rare grace was given him, by the help of which he was able to heal every sort of illness, tame wild beasts, and perceive the most distant regions of the earth and the hearts of men. He was taken out of the body and saw the heavens, conversed with angels, harried the demons, prophesied, spent thirty days at a time without sleep and even longer without food, receiving nourishment at the hands of angels." He reposed at the age of 85; seventy-nine years of his life had been spent in asceticism.

Our Holy Father Nikita Stylites (1136)

As a youth, he was heedless and corrupt; but one day he entered a church and heard the words of Isaiah, 'Wash you, make you clean' (Is. 1:16). His life changed completely: he left his family and property to enter a monastery near Pereyaslav, where he took on a life of severe asceticism. He wore chains and (in the words of the *Prologue*, 'shut himself up in a pillar', for which he was called the Stylite. He was granted the gift of healing and by his prayers restored many who came to him, including Michael, Prince of Chernigov, whom he healed of palsy. Some thieves, seeing his chains and thinking that they were made of silver, killed him one night and made off with the chains. Soon afterward, Saint Nikita appeared to an elder named Simson and told him to put the chains with him in his grave when they were found.

St Vincent of Lerins (443)

He was born in Toul in Gaul (modern-day France); he was the brother of St Lupus, Bishop of Troyes. He served as a soldier, but eventually became a monk at the monastery of Lerins. There he lived out the remainder of his life, and wrote his

Commonitorium, an exposition of the true Orthodox faith; it contains the well-known statement that Christians must hold to the Faith that has been believed "everywhere, always, and by all." He reposed in peace.

MAY 25

† Third Finding of the Precious Head of St John the Baptist (~850)

In the eighth century, during the iconoclast persecutions, the head of St John the Baptist was taken to Comana (the place of St John Chrysostom's exile) for safekeeping, and was lost. (The iconoclasts attacked not only the holy icons, but the veneration of relics of the Saints, sometimes destroying the relics themselves.) When the persecutions ended, the location of the head was revealed to a priest, and it was found in a silver vessel, "in a sacred place." It was returned to Constantinople with great solemnity and celebration. See the First and Second Findings, commemorated February 24.

Where is it now? After several inquiries, we have not been able to learn whether the Head of St John the Baptist is lost again, or whether it rests in some known place. Information welcomed at webmaster@abbamoses.com.

Holy Hieromartyr Therapon, Bishop of Cyprus (4th c.)

Little is recorded of his earthly life, except that he was a monk and ascetic on Cyprus who rose to episcopal rank, and that he was martyred during a persecution of Christians. His body rested for centuries in a church in Cyprus. Then in 806, during the reign of the Emperor Nikephoros, The Saint appeared to the church's caretaker, warned him that infidels were about to attack Cyprus, and ordered that his relics be transferred to Constantinople. Without hesitation the caretaker had the casket containing St Therapon's relics put in a ship bound for the Capital. During the journey a great storm arose, but the waters around the ship remained calm, and a sweet scent filled the ship. The caretaker opened the casket and found that it was full to overflowing of a fragrant myrrh which exuded from the holy martyr's relics. In Constantinople, a church was built over the Saint's relics, which became known as a powerful source of healing for those who approached in faith.

Holy Martyrs Pasicrates, Valentinian, Julius and those with them (302)

"They were Roman soldiers, and suffered for Christ in about 302 in Macedonian Dorostol, when Pasicrates' brother, Papianus (who had apostatised from Christ through fear), came to his brother and tried to persuade him to renounce Christ and stay alive. St Pasicrates replied: 'Get away from me; you are no brother of mine!' Pasicrates and Valentinian were beheaded together. At his trial, Julius said: 'I am a war veteran, and have served the Emperor faithfully for twenty-six years. And, having been faithful till now in lesser things, how can I not be faithful, in the things that are greater, to the heavenly Kingdom and its King?' Then Nicanor was brought before the prefect, Maximus. Nicanor's wife encouraged her husband to die for the sake of Christ. 'You stupid old woman,' Maximus hurled at her, 'Are you after a better husband?' She replied: 'If you think that of me, give the order to have me killed now, before my husband!' Marcian also perished with Nicanor. His wife came to the place of execution, carrying their son in her arms. Marcian kissed his son and prayed: 'O almighty God, do Thou take care of him!' And they were all then slain and entered into the Kingdom of Christ." (*Prologue*)

MAY 26

Holy Apostle Carpus of the Seventy

He was one of the Seventy and a companion of St Paul, who mentions him in 2 Timothy 4:13. He became a Bishop in Thrace (the *Great Horologion* says in Berea, the *Prologue* in Varna), where he suffered martyrdom. St Dionysius the Areopagite met and wrote about him, stating that Carpus never began the Liturgy without first receiving a heavenly vision.

From the Prologue: "We must not desire the death of a sinner, but his repentance. Nothing so saddens the Lord who suffered on the Cross for sinners as when we pray to Him for the death of a sinner and his removal from our path. It once happened that the Apostle Carpus lost patience and began to pray God to send death upon two sinful men, the one pagan and the other an apostate from the Faith. The Lord appeared to him and said: 'Behold, here I am; ready to be crucified again for the salvation of men.' St Carpus related this event to St Dionysius the Areopagite, who wrote it down as a lesson for all in the Church that we must pray for the salvation of sinners and not for their destruction. For the Lord 'is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance' (II Peter 3:9)."

Saint Augustine of Canterbury, evangelizer of England (~605)

He is the founder of the Church in southern England, which at that time was almost entirely pagan, though Christianity thrived in the Celtic lands of Ireland, Wales and parts of Scotland. Augustine, a monk at the monastery of St Andrew in Rome, was chosen by Pope Gregory I to lead a mission to England. He and a party of about forty monks landed in England in 597; they were received warmly by King Aethelbert, who was baptised by Augustine and thus became the first Christian king of the Anglo-Saxon people. In 601 Pope Gregory made Augustine Archbishop of Britain, and he established his cathedral at Canterbury, where he also established a monastery. Saint Augustine worked unsuccessfully to unite his churches with those of the Irish monks and hierarchs, who followed different liturgical practices, kept a different date of Pascha, and disapproved of the less severe Roman monastic practices introduced by the Archbishop. He reposed in peace.

Holy New Martyr Alexander of Thessalonica (1794)

He was born in Thessalonica and, though baptised a Christian, he accepted Islam as a young man, eventually becoming a Sufi (one of a mystical sect among the Muslims). But in time he began to repent, and concluded that martyrdom was the only way for him to cleanse himself from the stain of his denial of Christ. Having repented, he presented himself to the Turks dressed as a Christian. He was thrown into prison and tortured, but in response to every enticement, threat or torment, he would only say 'I was born a Christian, and as a Christian I shall die.' Finally he was sentenced to death, which Alexander joyfully accepted as a sign of God's forgiveness. He was slain by the sword in Smyrna in 1794.

MAY 27**Hieromartyr Therapon, bishop of Sardis (259)**

For boldly preaching Christ and bringing many to the Faith, he was seized and tortured by the pagans. After imprisoning and starving him, his persecutors bound him to four posts and flogged him until the flesh was stripped from his bones. But he remained alive, and the four dead posts to which he was tied sprouted into tall, green trees, from which many received healing. At last St Therapon was slain by the sword, during the reign of the Emperor Valerian.

Holy Martyrs Theodora and Didymus (304)

"In the reign of the wicked Emperor Maximilian, there lived in Alexandria a maiden, Theodora, well-educated and of noble lineage. She was brought to trial before the pagans for her Christian faith. After long interrogation and torture for the Faith, the prince, her tormentor, ordered that she be thrown into a brothel and the soldiers given free access to her to indulge their carnal lusts. Theodora prayed fervently to God to save her from defilement, and, when she had prayed, a soldier called Didymus came in to her and told her that he was a servant of Christ. He dressed her in his soldier's garb and himself in her dress, then let her out and remained in the brothel himself. He was seized and brought before the judge, where he acknowledged that he was a Christian and had saved Theodora, and was now prepared to die for Christ. He was condemned to death and taken out to the place of execution. Theodora ran up to him there and cried out: 'Although you saved my honour, I did not ask you to save me from death. Yield the martyr's death to me!' Didymus replied: 'My beloved sister, do not hinder my death for Christ, nor the washing of my sins in my blood.' Hearing this exchange, the pagans condemned them both to death, and they were beheaded and their bodies burned. They suffered with honour and received eternal wreaths of glory in Alexandria in the year 304." (*Prologue*)

Holy New Confessor John the Russian (1730)

He was captured during a Russian campaign against the Turks in 1711, and sold into slavery in Asia Minor. As a slave he strove to serve God faithfully, while serving his earthly master in everything honorable. Despite many enticements offered by the Muslims to renounce his faith, he remained steadfast, and was permitted to work miracles through his prayers. He reposed in peace in 1730. His relics remained incorrupt.

Saint David of Garesjei (6th c.)

"This David is one of the thirteen Georgian Fathers (May 7). He is thus named for the Garajeli desert near Tiflis, where he lived the ascetic life. In old age, David decided to visit the Holy Land with several of his disciples. He left the direction of the monastery to two elders, Lucian and Dodo, and set out on the way. When they came to a hill from which Jerusalem was visible, David burst into tears and said: 'How can I dare to walk in the steps of God incarnate with these sinful feet?', he told his disciples to go and worship at the holy places, but he himself took up three stones and set off to return. But the Lord did not let such humility remain hidden from the world, and an angel appeared to Elias, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and said to him: 'Send at once for the elder who is even now returning to Syria; he has taken with him three stones, and is carrying with him all the Holy Land's grace. One stone is a sufficient blessing for him; let him return the other two to Jerusalem. He is called Abba David of Garesjei.' The Patriarch quickly sent men off to overtake the elder. They took two stones from him, and let him go on his way. The third stone lies on his grave to this day, and possesses miraculous healing power." (*Prologue*)

Venerable Bede (Baeda) (735)

He spent almost his entire life as a monk in England, and is known primarily for his many writings. He entered the monastery at Wearmouth at the age of seven, and later moved (perhaps as one of the founders) to the monastery of Jarrow, where he spent the remainder of his life. He was ordained to the priesthood in his thirtieth year. In addition to many works of biblical exegesis, very popular in the middle ages, he compiled the *Ecclesiastical History*, still the primary source for the history of Christianity's establishment in the British Isles. He reposed in peace.

A problem: Bede lived during the time of the undivided Church, but was only canonized, in the west, in 1899, centuries after the Great Schism. Presumably, then, he has never been formally glorified by the Orthodox Church. Is he a Saint of the Church? We leave the answer to wiser heads.

MAY 28

St Nicetas the Confessor, bishop of Chalcedon (9th c.)

He entered monastic life in early youth, and in time rose to the rank of Bishop in Chalcedon. As a hierarch, he showed outstanding compassion for the poor, caring for many orphans, widows and beggars. When the Emperor Leo the Armenian attacked the holy icons, Nicetas stood against him, and was driven into exile, where he reposed after much hardship and suffering.

MAY 29

Virgin-martyr Theodosia of Tyre (308)

During the persecutions of the Emperor Maximian, the virgin Theodosia came to comfort a group of Christians who were standing before the governor of Caesarea in Palestine. When she encouraged them not to shun martyrdom, she too was brought before the judge, who ordered that a stone be tied around her neck and that she be thrown into the sea; but angels carried her to shore unharmed. The judge then ordered that she be beheaded. The night that the sentence was carried out, Theodosia appeared to her parents, surrounded by heavenly light and accompanied by other virgin martyrs, and said, 'Do you see how great is the glory and grace of my Christ, of which you wished to deprive me?' (Her parents, wishing to preserve her from martyrdom, had tried to prevent her from confessing Christ).

Commemoration of the First Ecumenical Council (325)

The council was called by the Emperor Constantine the Great and held in Nicea in 325. The teaching of the Alexandrian priest Arius — that Christ is not co-eternal with the Father, but is His divine creation — was attracting many followers throughout the empire, and the Emperor wished for a statement of correct doctrine from the Church. Present at the council were 318 holy hierarchs, including St Nicholas of Myra, St Athanasius the great, and St Spyridon. The council clearly condemned the Arian heresy, formulated the first version of the Symbol of Faith (often called the Nicene Creed), and propounded twenty canons. The Fathers of the Council are commemorated on the Sunday after Ascension.

The Fall of Constantinople (1453); "Blessed Constantine XII, last of the Byzantine emperors, martyred by the Turks (1453)"

On this date in 1453, Constantinople, the capital city of the Christian world, was sacked by the forces of Sultan Mehmet (Mohammed) II, bringing it under Turkish rule, where it remains to this day.

Constantine XII, the last Byzantine Emperor, died defending the city. Sources are sharply divided as to whether he is to be counted as a Christian Martyr. The designation "Blessed Constantine", above, is from the *St Herman Calendar*, whose compilers cite Russian martyrologies which list him as a saint. However, the *Prologue* cites the fall of Constantinople while pointedly omitting any praise of Constantine. He accepted (and never publicly renounced) the false "union" of Florence, and so is counted by some as a heretic. Many Orthodox Christians, including many of the people of Constantinople, saw the city's fall as divine retribution for the Empire's acceptance of the union.

Before his death the Emperor donned soldier's armor and helped to man the ramparts of the City; his body was never found. Though various legends abound, the most likely explanation is that he died with many other defenders and was cast with them into a common grave.

MAY 30

St Isaac, founder of the Dalmatian Monastery at Constantinople (333)

While a hermit in the east, Isaac heard that the Arians, supported by the Emperor Valens, were persecuting Orthodoxy. Leaving his seclusion, he traveled to Constantinople, where he lived in a small hut. He confronted the Emperor, telling him that if he did not cease his persecutions and embrace the true Faith, disaster would befall him. The Emperor ignored his words, and shortly thereafter was killed in a battle with the Goths. The Emperor Theodosius the Great then came to the throne, restoring peace to the Church. Hearing of Isaac and his prophecy, the Emperor sent for Isaac and prostrated before him. Isaac wished to return to the desert, but was persuaded to remain as a monk in Constantinople. He took part in the Second Ecumenical Council, where he shone in zeal for the Faith; the Third Ecumenical Council made him archimandrite over all the monasteries in the City. (Some say that the monastery founded by him is called the Dalmatian Monastery because it was built by Dalmatus, a wealthy nobleman of the City; others say that it was founded by St Isaac himself and later took its name from Abbot Dalmatus, who succeeded Isaac). In his own lifetime St Isaac was known far and wide as a wonderworker and one endowed with the gift of prophecy.

Saint Isaac is also commemorated in August 3, along with Dalmatus and his son Faustus.

St Macrina, grandmother of St Basil the Great (4th c.)

The grandmother of St Basil the Great, she was outstanding for her intellect and piety. She was a disciple of St Gregory the Wonder-worker of Neocaesarea. In the reign of Diocletian, she abandoned her home and hid in the forests and desert places

with her husband, Basil. Although their home was confiscated, they felt no pangs of regret. Stripped of everything except their love for God, they settled in an ancient forest and spent seven years there. By God's providence, goats would come down from the mountains and provide them with food. They both died peacefully in the fourth century, after great sufferings for the Christian faith." (*Prologue*)

MAY 31

Apostle Hermas of the Seventy

He is mentioned in the Epistles of St Paul (Romans 16:14). He served as a bishop in the first-century Church, and died a martyr. His book, *The Shepherd*, is one of the earliest Christian writings outside of the New Testament, and was held in such esteem by the early Church that it is sometimes found in ancient collections of the Holy Scriptures.

Hermas had been a wealthy man, but had fallen into poverty through his sins. A man, clad all in white and holding a staff, appeared to St Hermas and, telling him that he was an angel of repentance, gave St Hermas twelve commandments:

- To believe in God
- To live in simplicity and innocence
- To love truth and flee from falsehood
- To guard his thoughts in chastity
- To learn patience and magnanimity of soul
- To know that a good and an evil spirit attend every man
- To fear God, but not the devil
- To perform every good deed and to restrain himself from every evil one
- To pray to God in faith from the depths of his heart, so that his prayer might be heard
- To preserve himself from melancholy, the daughter of doubt, and from anger
- To try true and false prophecies
- To preserve himself from every evil desire.

* 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 Zlita (Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic);
 and the *Great Horologion*, published by Holy Transfiguration Monastery.



Holy Wonderworkers and Unmercenarys Cyrus and John, and those with them (311)

They are counted among the Unmercenary Physicians. Cyrus was a physician living in Alexandria. A pious Christian, he healed not only bodies but souls, bringing many to Christ, and often healing through prayer rather than the use of his medicines. He often said to his patients, 'If you want to keep clear of illness, take care not to sin, because more often than not illness is a result of sin.' When Diocletian's persecution broke out, Cyrus was denounced to the pagan governor and fled to Arabia, where he became a monk. He gained great renown there by healing many ailments using only the sign of the Cross.

John was a soldier from Edessa who heard of Cyrus' deeds and, leaving the army, sought him out. They met in Egypt, where John became a monk and Cyrus' disciple, joining him in the practice of the virtues and in healing illnesses by prayer.

They heard of the arrest of a Christian lady named Athanasia and her daughters Theoctista and Eudoxia. Concerned that the tender maidens might renounce Christ under torture, the two monks sought them out to encourage them in their confession of the Faith. They themselves were captured, and the governor decided to have them tortured in front of the women, assuming that this would break their spirit. Instead, Cyrus and John bore their sufferings so patiently and boldly that the women were only strengthened in their resolve. Seeing that he had failed, the governor had all five of them beheaded. Their bodies were placed in the Church of St Mark in Alexandria.

In the fifth century the relics of Sts Cyrus and John were enshrined in a church at Aboukir near Alexandria by St Cyril (June 9). There they were the source of abundant healings and miracles, and the shrine became one of the greatest places of pilgrimage in the Christian world.

Venerable Nicetas, hermit of the Kiev Caves and Bishop of Novgorod (1108)

His is a remarkable story of spiritual delusion (*prelest* in Russian) and repentance of delusion. Nicetas was a young and zealous monk of the Lavra of the Kiev Caves who, against the advice of his abbot St Nikon (March 25), retired alone to a cave and walled himself in. Some time later, the young monk experienced a delightful scent filling his cave. Believing himself to be receiving a divine revelation, he cried out 'Lord, show Thyself to me, that I might worship Thee face to face!' A voice answered, 'I am sending you an angel: do whatever he tells you.' The Devil soon appeared to him as an 'angel of light' and Nicetas, completely taken in, prostrated before him. The Devil ordered him to stop praying and to devote all his time to reading and memorizing the Old Testament. Nicetas obeyed without question. After awhile, the Devil began to reveal to him things that were happening in the outside world, so that the young monk acquired a reputation for prophecy among visitors to his cave. When the Elders of the Caves realized that Nicetas never spoke to his visitors or anyone else of the New Testament, they decided that he was beguiled by the Devil. Breaking down the door of his cave, they drove out the deceiver by their prayers and forcibly took the young hermit back to the monastery.

As soon as the evil angel had been driven off, Nicetas became like a young child: he instantly forgot the entire Old Testament (which he had virtually memorized) and even lost the ability to read, so that he had to be sent to school again. Slowly he returned to himself, realized his former delusion and repented in tears. Thereafter he devoted himself to humility and obedience in the monastic community. Such was his repentance and progress in the virtues that he was later made Bishop of Novgorod. He reposed in peace in 1108 and became known for working many miracles, especially healing of blindness.

? 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.

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