

# God is Wonderful in His Saints

## Orthodox Saints commemorated in November

### NOVEMBER 1

† Holy and Wonderworking Unmercenarics Cosmas and Damian of Asia (3rd c.)

Three pairs of Unmercenary Physicians (*Anargyri*) named Cosmas and Damian are commemorated (today, on October 17, and on July 1); The two commemorated today lived near Ephesus in Asia. They were of noble birth and well-educated in all the branches of higher learning; but they turned away from worldly knowledge to practice medicine without charge for anyone who sought their help, caring for the rich as well as poor, and even for animals. They used none of the secular tools of medicine, but relied only on the Name of Christ, by which they were enabled to perform countless healings. Both reposed in peace.

Holy New Martyr Helen of Sinope (18th c.)

She was a maiden of fifteen who lived with her parents in the Christian enclave of Sinope in Pontus during the 1700s. One day, as she went to the marketplace, she passed by the house of the local Pasha (governor), who, seeing her beauty, was seized by lust for her. He ordered his servants to bring her to him, and made two attempts to defile her; each time, however, he was prevented by a mysterious power that kept him from her like an invisible wall. Determined to have his way for her, he kept her prisoner in his house; but she was able to slip away and run home to her parents' house.

Enraged that his prey had escaped, the Pasha called together the leaders of the Christian community and promised that, unless Helen were handed over to him, all the Christians in the town would be massacred. Grief-stricken and fearful, the leaders persuaded Helen's father to return the girl to the palace. The vile Pasha made several more attempts to rape the Saint, but once again he was restrained as if by an invisible wall as she recited the Six Psalms and all the prayers that she knew by heart. Realizing that he was powerless against her, the Pasha had her thrown in the common jail, then ordered that she be tortured to death. The executioners subjected the maiden to several cruel torments before killing her by driving two nails into her skull and beheading her. They then put her body in a sack and threw it in the Black Sea.

Some Greek sailors followed a heavenly light to the place where the sack had sunk, and divers retrieved the Saint's relics, which immediately revealed themselves as a source of healing for many. Her body was taken to Russia; her head was placed in the church in Sinope, where it continued to work miracles, especially for those who suffered from headaches. When the Greeks were driven from Sinope in 1924, refugees took the head with them. It is venerated today in a church near Thessalonika.

### NOVEMBER 2

Holy Martyrs Acindynus, Pegasius, Aphthonius, Elpidophorus and Anempodistus of Persia (376)

Acindynus, Pegasius and Anempodistus were courtiers to King Shapur II of Persia. When the king began a fierce persecution of Christians, the three withdrew from court to a private house and, fearless of their own safety, openly exhorted their fellow-Christians to stand firm in their faith. For this they were arrested and brought before their former lord, who subjected them to many cruel tortures, from which they emerged miraculously unscathed. Seeing this, one of the king's soldiers, named Aphthonius, embraced the Faith and was immediately beheaded. The former courtiers were then put to further tortures, but their only effect was to convince Elpidophorus, a distinguished nobleman, and seven thousand other Persians to faith in Christ. All were beheaded, but not before receiving holy Baptism. The trials of the three continued, but once again they were preserved, and even the king's mother was led to the true faith. Finally they were killed (the account does not say how), receiving the crown of martyrdom along with the king's mother and twenty-eight others.

### NOVEMBER 3

Holy Martyrs Acopsimas the bishop, Joseph the priest and Aithalas the deacon (378-379)

King Shapur II of Persia conducted a fierce persecution of Christians in his realm for thirty-seven years. In the final years of this persecution he gave his magi authority to torture and kill any Christians who would not renounce their faith.

Acopsimas, the aged and holy Bishop of Paka, was arrested along with Joseph the priest and Aithalas the deacon. All not only refused to deny Christ, but boldly preached Him before the magi and the king. The enraged king had them viciously tortured, then, as a final indignity, made prisoners of all the local Christians and forced them to stone their own shepherds to death. With their martyrdom the great persecution in Persia came to an end.

Holy Virgin Martyr Winifride of Traffynnon (Holywell), Wales (7th c.)

"Saint Winefride (in Welsh, Gwenfrewi) was a maiden of noble birth who lived in North Wales in the seventh century. The niece and spiritual daughter of Saint Beuno (21 April), she entered the Monastery of Gwytherin after his death, where she lived under the spiritual direction of Saint Eleril. The son of a neighbouring chieftan, Caradoc by name, seized by an unchaste passion, pursued her and struck off her head with a sword. The spot where her head fell became known as Treffynnon or Holywell, because of the appearing of a healing spring for those who would take its waters with faith. Holywell remains a great place of pilgrimage in Britain to this day." (*Synaxarion*)

#### NOVEMBER 4

##### Our Holy Father Joannicius the Great, hermit on Mt Olympus (846)

He was born in Bithynia of peasant stock. He worked as a swineherd, then became an officer in the Imperial army, where he served with such distinction in the war against the Bulgars that the Emperor Constantine VI wanted to take him into his personal service. "But the sight of massacres and horrors of war had brought home to him the vanity of this life. He asked leave of the Emperor to retire from the service, in order to wage unseen warfare in the ranks of the angelic army" (*Synaxarion*). In the coming years he traveled widely, sometimes living as a hermit, sometimes living in monasteries, more than once founding a monastic community. Wherever he went he lived in stillness, solitude and strict asceticism. He was famed for his spiritual counsel, his prophecies, his many miracles of healing ailments bodily and spiritual, and for his friendship with animals. Once a monk who doubted the Saint's miracles was eating at table with him when a large bear burst in upon them. Joannicius called the bear and it came and lay at his feet; he then told it to lie at the feet of his frightened guest and said "At their creation, the animals looked with veneration on man, who is made in the image of God, and he had no fear of them. We are afraid of them now because we have transgressed God's commandments. If we love the Lord Jesus and keep his commandments, no animal will be able to do us any harm." The monk departed greatly edified.

In the last years of Joannicius' life, when he was about ninety years old, the Emperor Theophilus sought his counsel on the veneration of icons. The Saint's answer was pointed: "Whoever refuses due honor to the images of Christ, of the Mother of God and of the Saints, will not be received into the Kingdom of Heaven, even if he has lived an otherwise blameless life."

Once Joannicius traveled to Constantinople to aid the Patriarch in some matters concerning the order of the Church. When he returned to his hermitage, he found that some jealous monks had set it on fire. Knowing who they were, he nevertheless addressed them kindly and invited them to share with him some food that he had managed to salvage from the fire. He did not attempt to rebuild his hermitage, but, taking the fire as a sign of his impending departure from this life, he traveled to the monastery of Antidion, where he had first entered into the monastic life and there, having predicted the day of his death, he reposed in peace. At the moment of his death, the monks of Mt Olympus saw a pillar of fire ascending from the earth to the sky.

The Saint's relics have been the source of many miracles. His skull is kept and venerated at the Monastery of the Pantocrator on Mt Athos. The widely-used prayer "My hope is the Father; my refuge is the Son; my shelter is the Holy Spirit; O Holy Trinity, glory be to Thee!" is attributed to St Joannicius.

#### NOVEMBER 5

##### Holy Martyrs Galaction and Episteme (~250)

A pagan couple, Cleitophon and Leucippe, who lived in Emesa in the reign of the Emperor Decius, were grieved that they were unable to have children. One day a monk named Onuphrius came to their door seeking alms to give to the poor, and seeing Leucippe's downcast face, asked her what was wrong. When she replied that she was barren, Onuphrius told her that this was by God's providence, to prevent their child from being given over to idolatry, and that if they accepted Christ she would bear a child. Leucippe was baptized into the Faith and bore a son not long after, which in turn brought her husband to faith in Christ. The son was named Galaction in baptism.

Years later, Galaction's father, now widowed, decided that Galaction should marry a pagan maiden named Episteme. Galaction married out of obedience, but would not approach Episteme's bed since she was a pagan. In time, he convinced her of the truth of the Faith and baptised her himself. Not long after she was told in a dream of the glory that awaits those who consecrate themselves wholly to God. When she told her husband of the dream, they both resolved to remain in virginity, settling in separate monastic communities near to one another.

In one of the Emperor's persecutions of Christians, Galaction was seized by imperial soldiers and taken away to be killed. Episteme, told in a vision of his arrest, asked the blessing of her abess to join him in martyrdom. Receiving it, she hurried to Galaction's place of imprisonment, boldly announced her faith in Christ, and after many tortures and humiliations husband and wife were beheaded together.

Holy Apostles Petros, Hervas, Linus, Gaius and Philologus

They are numbered among the Seventy Disciples of the Lord.

Saint Hermas and Saint Patrobulus are both mentioned by St Paul in Romans 16:4. Saint Hermas became Bishop of Philippi. Some believe him to be the author of *The Shepherd*, which was so cherished by the early Church that is included in some early versions of the New Testament. Saint Patrobulus became Bishop of Pozzuoli in Italy.

Saint Linus (mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:21) was ordained by St Peter as first Bishop of Rome. He was martyred, perhaps in AD 76.

Saint Caius (mentioned in Romans 16:23, where we learn that St Paul stayed with him in Corinth), succeeded St Timothy as Bishop of Ephesus.

Saint Philologus (mentioned in Romans 16:15), was made Bishop of Sinope in Pontus by the Apostle Andrew.

Our Holy Father Gregory the Confessor, Patriarch of Alexandria (early 9th c.)

This much-loved shepherd of the Church at Alexandria was unanimously elected to the Patriarchate by the Bishops and people of that city. Though meek and humble, he was a fierce defender of holy Orthodoxy, which was then under attack by the Emperor Leo the Armenian (813-820). For his fearless defense of the holy Icons, Gregory was arrested at the Emperor's orders and brought in chains to Constantinople. Brought before Leo, the holy Patriarch told him clearly that he was a heretic and an enemy of the Church. The enraged Emperor had Gregory scourged, then sent into exile, where he reposed three years later.

## NOVEMBER 6

Paul the Confessor, Archbishop of Constantinople (~350)

A native of Thessalonica, he rose from secretary to Alexander, Patriarch of Constantinople (commemorated August 30), to deacon, then succeeded St Alexander as Patriarch around 337. For his virtue and his zeal for Orthodoxy he was hated by the Arians, who were still powerful in the Empire. The Arian Emperor Constantius, learning of Paul's election, exiled him and made the Arian Eusebius Patriarch in his place. St Paul went to Rome, where he joined St Athanasius the Great in exile. Furnished with letters from Pope Julius, he was able to ascend the Patriarchal throne once again upon the death of Eusebius. But once again the Arians were able to put one of their party on the Patriarchal throne: Macedonius, who even went beyond the Arian heresy denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Once again the legitimate, Orthodox Patriarch found himself in exile in Rome. In succeeding years St Paul stood firm for Orthodoxy while complex political and military intrigues swirled around him, with the Orthodox Constans, Emperor of the West (and Constantius' brother) supporting him while Constantius continued to oppose him. For a time Constans was able to enforce Paul's place on the Patriarchal throne, but when he died, Constantius banished St Paul to Cuculus on the Black Sea. There, while he was celebrating the Divine Liturgy in the house where he was kept prisoner, the Arians strangled him with his own omophorion. His relics were brought back to Constantinople by the Emperor Theodosius the Great.

Saint Germanus, Archbishop of Kazan (1568)

He was born in Tver to a princely family. Drawn to a life of holiness from his earliest childhood, he became a monk at the age of twenty-five, at the Monastery of St Joseph of Volokolamsk. In time he became Archimandrite of the Monastery of the Dormition at Staritsk; but after a few years he returned to Volokolamsk to live in solitude. When his teacher St Gurias (October 4), first Archbishop of Kazan, reposed, Germanus succeeded him as Archbishop, but continued to live as ascetically as when he was a hermit. He was offered the office of Metropolitan of Moscow, but refused. As a faithful shepherd of his church, he fearlessly confronted Tsar Ivan the Terrible for his many and various cruelties; for this he was killed in 1568 by the Tsar's assassins.

*Note: Recently, a bizarre movement has arisen among some nationalist sectarians in Russia to canonize Ivan the Terrible. Among the many obvious reasons against such an action (which has been firmly rejected by the Patriarch of Moscow), we could list the Tsar's murder of some of the Church's own Saints, Germanus among them.*

## NOVEMBER 7

St Hieron and his thirty-three Companions, martyred at Melitene (290)

Hieron was a farmer from Tyana in Cappadocia, known for his great bodily strength as well as purity of soul. Hearing of his prowess, imperial soldiers came to draft him into the army. Knowing that he would be required to make sacrifices to the idols, Hieron drove them off with only a wooden staff, then hid in the wilderness. Later, however, he went to the Governor voluntarily and openly confessed his faith in Christ. For this his right hand was cut off and he was imprisoned with thirty-two other believers. As they awaited their end, Hieron strengthened the others in the Faith. All were beheaded together outside Melitene in Armenia.

Saint Willibrord, first Bishop of Utrecht and Apostle of Holland (739)

He was born in Northumbria in England around 638. At the age of seven he was sent to the monastery at Ripon for education under St Wilfrid (April 24), the abbot. At the age of twenty he traveled to Ireland to live among the holy monks of that land; he spent twelve years there as the spiritual child of St Egbert (also April 24). In 690 St Egbert sent Willibrord as head of a company of twelve monks to take the Gospel to the pagan lands around Frisia. The holy missionary first went to Rome to receive the blessing of Pope Sergius, then with his fellow-monks preached the Gospel throughout Holland and Zeeland. In 695 Pope Sergius consecrated Willibrord Archbishop of Utrecht, instructing him to organize the Church throughout that area. As Archbishop, Willibrord continued to labor tirelessly for the spread of the Gospel in those pagan lands; his missionary travels took him as far as Denmark. He reposed in peace in 739 at Echternach Monastery (located in present-day in Luxembourg), having served for forty-four years as a bishop and for most of his life as a monastic. His tomb soon became a place of pilgrimage.

#### NOVEMBER 8

† Synaxis of the Chief Captains of the Heavenly Host, Michael and Gabriel, and of the other Bodiless Powers of Heaven

The holy Scriptures, from beginning to end, are filled with mentions and descriptions of the Heavenly Host: not to believe in angels is not to believe in the Bible. In the heavens they behold the face of God, eternally hymning His glory. They are intimately involved with mankind as well: an angel is appointed guardian over every nation, and over every individual Christian. The Archangels Michael and Gabriel, whom we especially commemorate today along with all the other bodiless powers, have served as messengers to man. "Michael" means "Who is like God?"; "Gabriel" means "God is mighty." Gabriel especially was appointed to announce the coming of Christ in the flesh.

There is no reckoning the number of the Heavenly Host, though we know that they are a great multitude. They are ranked in nine orders, called Thrones, Cherubim, Seraphim, Dominions, Powers, Authorities, Principalities, Archangels, and Angels. "Angel" means "herald" or "messenger" and is properly applied only to those who serve as messengers from God to man; but the name is often applied to the entire host of bodiless powers.

Though bodiless, the angels are finite in knowledge, extension and power. The angel Lucifer, once the highest of them all, desired to be like God Himself, and was cast forever from the presence of God, along with countless others who followed him. These we now know as Satan and the demons. (Needless to say, they are not commemorated today).

#### NOVEMBER 9

† Our Father among the Saints Nectarius (Nektarios), bishop of Pentapolis, Wonderworker, and founder of the Monastery of the Holy Trinity on Aegina (1920).

"Saint Nectarius was born in Selyvria of Thrace on October 11, 1846. After putting himself through school in Constantinople with much hard labour, he became a monk on Chios in 1876, receiving the monastic name of Lazarus; because of his virtue, a year later he was ordained deacon, receiving the new name of Nectarius. Under the patronage of Patriarch Sophronius of Alexandria, Nectarius went to Athens to study in 1882; completing his theological studies in 1885, he went to Alexandria, where Patriarch Sophronius ordained him priest on March 23, 1886 in the Cathedral of Saint Sabbas, and in August of the same year, in the Church of Saint Nicholas in Cairo, made him Archimandrite. Archimandrite Nectarius showed much zeal both for preaching the word of God, and for the beauty of God's house. He greatly beautified the Church of Saint Nicholas in Cairo, and years later, when Nectarius was in Athens, Saint Nicholas appeared to him in a dream, embracing him and saying to him he was going to exalt him very high.

"On January 15, 1889, in the same Church of Saint Nicholas, Nectarius was consecrated Metropolitan of Pentapolis in eastern Libya, which was under the jurisdiction of Alexandria. Although Nectarius' swift ascent through the degrees of ecclesiastical office did not affect his modesty and childlike innocence, it aroused the envy of lesser men, who convinced the elderly Sophronius that Nectarius had it in his heart to become Patriarch. Since the people loved Nectarius, the Patriarch was troubled by the slanders. On May 3, 1890, Sophronius relieved Metropolitan Nectarius of his duties; in July of the same year, he commanded Nectarius to leave Egypt.

"Without seeking to avenge or even to defend himself, the innocent Metropolitan left for Athens, where he found that accusations of immorality had arrived before him. Because his good name had been soiled, he was unable to find a position worthy of a bishop, and in February of 1891 accepted the position of provincial preacher in Euboea; then, in 1894, he was appointed dean of the Rizarios Ecclesiastical School in Athens. Through his eloquent sermons, his unwearying labours to educate fitting men for the priesthood, his generous almsdeeds despite his own poverty, and the holiness, meekness, and fatherly love that were manifest in him, he became a shining light and a spiritual guide to many. At the request of certain pious women, in 1904 he began the building of his convent of the Holy Trinity on the island of Aegina while yet dean of the Rizarios School; finding later that his presence there was needed, he took up his residence on Aegina in 1908, where he spent

the last years of his life, devoting himself to the direction of his convent and to very intense prayer; he was sometimes seen lifted above the ground while rapt in prayer. He became the protector of all Aegina, through his prayers delivering the island from drought, healing the sick, and casting out demons. Here also he endured wicked slanders with singular patience, forgiving his false accusers and not seeking to avenge himself. Although he had already worked wonders in life, a innumerable multitude of miracles have been wrought after his repose in 1920 through his holy relics, which for many years remained incorrupt. There is hardly a malady that has not been cured through his prayers; but Saint Nectarius is especially renowned for his healings of cancer for sufferers in all parts of the world." (*Great Horologion*)

#### Our Venerable Father John the Dwarf (John the Short) (4th c.)

He lived in the desert of Skete (Scetis) in Egypt during the fourth century, the golden age of the Desert Fathers. Nothing is known of his life in the world. He spent many years as the disciple of Abba Ammos, who was very severe with him. Once the Elder took a dry stick, stuck it in the sand, and commanded John to water it every day until it bore fruit. Though this was plainly impossible, John performed the task uncomplainingly, walking a great distance to fetch the water, for three years. At the end of that time, the stick bore fruit. Abba Ammos brought it to church the following Sunday and called out to the brethren, "Come and eat the fruit of obedience!" Though he had never praised or thanked his disciple, before he died Abba Ammos said of John, "He is an angel, not a man." After his elder's repose, Abba John withdrew further into the desert, devoting all his time to vigil and prayer. As he prayed he would weave baskets, which he sold to meet his few needs. Sometimes he was so rapt in prayer that he would keep weaving until the basket reached an absurd size, filling his cell.

When, after many years, Abba John was delivered from all evil thoughts, Abba Poemen (commemorated August 27) told him to pray to God for another temptation to struggle against, for only in this way does the soul make progress. He rejoiced when he was insulted, was never known to be angry with anyone, and would run away as fast as he could if he ever saw men quarreling. He reposed in peace.

*"Pray earnestly with compunction and vigilance. Pay no attention to the faults of others. Do not measure yourself against other people, for you are lower than every creature."* — Abba John the Dwarf

#### Holy Martyrs Onesiphorus and Porphyrius (284)

During the reign of Diocletian and Maximian, these pious Christians were arrested and brought before the judge, where they boldly proclaimed Christ the only true King and God. For this they were viciously tortured, but even when stretched on hot gridiron they gave thanks to God. The holy ones' joy infuriated their tormentors who finally tied them behind wild horses, who were set to gallop over rough countryside, tearing the two innocent martyrs to pieces. Pious Christians retrieved their relics and buried them at a town called Panceanon.

In an early account, Onesiphorus is identified with the companion whom St Paul mentions in 2 Timothy 4:19; this is not impossible, but most accounts do not mention this detail.

#### Our Holy Mother Matrona (492)

She was from Perga in Pamphylia, and married very young, to a youth named Domitian, to whom she bore a daughter. The couple settled in Constantinople. Matrona became so constant in attending all-night vigils in the city's many churches that her husband suspected her of infidelity and forbade her to go out. This was unbearable to Matrona, who fled the house with her daughter. Determined to embrace monastic life, she gave her daughter into the care of a nun named Susanna, disguised herself as a eunuch, and entered the monastery of St Bassian (October 10) under the name of Babylas. Though she amazed all with her zeal and ascetic labors, Bassian one day discerned that she was a woman. Though he reprimanded her severely because of her zeal, he was unwilling to drive her away from monastic life because of her zeal; so he directed her to go to Emesa in Syria to enter a certain women's monastery there.

Matrona continued to advance in the virtues, and once healed a blind man by anointing his eyes with myrrh from the head of St John the Baptist (which had been miraculously discovered around that time). The miracle became widely-known, and because of it Matrona's husband learned of her whereabouts. When he came to her monastery she escaped to Jerusalem, but he pursued her there too. She fled from place to place, even living for several years in an abandoned pagan temple in Beirut, where she was constantly assaulted by the demons that inhabited the place. In time several pagan women, seeing her struggles, asked to be her disciples, and a small monastic community sprang up in the pagan temple. After a few years she and her disciples made their way back to Constantinople, where St Bassian received her joyfully and helped her to establish a monastery. There she was visited by the Empress Verina, wife of Leo the Great, and many other noblewomen of the City, some of whom left all to join Matrona in monastic life. Saint Matrona lived to be almost one hundred years old and reposed in peace, having foretold the day of her death.

#### Saint Symeon Metaphrastes (960)

He was born in Constantinople, and through his exceptional intellect and learning rose to the rank of *Logothete* (Imperial Counselor), serving under three successive Emperors. He was so successful in negotiating with the Arabs who had occupied



Crete that the Emperor Basil II asked him to name his own reward. Symeon asked only that he be allowed to retire from public service and become a monk. The Emperor, though sad to lose such a valuable counselor, let him go, asking that he pray for his sins.

In monastic life, Symeon continued to apply his gifts of learning: from scattered manuscripts and earlier anthologies, he assembled a collection of *Lives* of almost 150 Saints, a work which forms the basis of the *Synaxaria* in use today. He also compiled a *Universal Chronicle* and edited the treatises of several Fathers of the Church. Because of his skilled and diligent labors, he is called *Metaphrastes*, meaning 'Translator' or 'editor'. He is the author of many beautiful prayers still in regular use today (one is found in the Prayers of Preparation for Communion). At his repose, a sweet-smelling and healing myrrh flowed from his body.

## NOVEMBER 10

### Holy Apostles of the Seventy Olympas, Rodion, Erastus, Sosipater and Quartus

All of these Apostles were among the Seventy, and all are mentioned by St Paul in Romans 16. Saints Olympas and Rodion followed St Peter to Rome and were beheaded under Nero around the year 54. The other three reposed in peace after serving the Church as bishops: St Sosipater as Bishop of Iconium; St Erastus (described by St Paul as city treasurer of Corinth) as Bishop of Paneas (Caesarea Philippi); St Quartus as Bishop of Beirut. Quartus is said to have converted most of the citizens of Beirut to faith in Christ before his repose.

### Our Venerable Father Arsenius of Cappadocia, the Wonderworker (1924)

Cappadocia (in eastern Turkey) is virtually devoid of Christians now, but in 1840, when St Arsenius was born there, there were still vital Orthodox communities. He became a monk and was sent to his native town, Farasa, to serve the people. He became known as a mighty intercessor before God, praying for all who came to him, Muslims as well as Christians. Countless miracles of healing became known throughout Cappadocia; those who could not come to see him would sometimes send articles of clothing for him to pray over. He became known as *Hadjiefendis*, a Muslim term of honor for pilgrims, because he made pilgrimage to the Holy Land every ten years on foot. He never accepted any gifts in return for his prayers and healings, saying "Our faith is not for sale!"

He concealed his holiness as much as he could beneath a rough and sharp-tempered exterior. If anyone expressed admiration for him, he would reply "So you think I'm a saint? I'm only a sinner worse than you. Don't you see that I even lose my temper? The miracles you see are done by Christ. I do no more than lift up my hands and pray to him." But as the Scriptures say, the prayers of a righteous man avail much, and when St Arsenius lifted up his hands, wonders often followed.

He lived in a small cell with an earthen floor, fasted often and was in the habit of shutting himself in his cell for at least two whole days every week to devote himself entirely to prayer.

Father Arsenius predicted the expulsion of the Greeks from Asia Minor before it happened, and organized his flock for departure. When the expulsion order came in 1924, the aged Saint led his faithful on a 400-mile journey across Turkey on foot. He had foretold that he would only live forty days after reaching Greece, and this came to pass. His last words were "The soul, the soul, take care of it more than the flesh, which will return to earth and be eaten by worms!" Two days later, on November 10, 1924, he died in peace and the age of eighty-three. Since 1970, many apparitions and miracles have occurred near his holy relics, which reside in the Monastery of Souroti near Thessalonica. He was officially glorified by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1986.

## NOVEMBER 11

### Holy Martyr Menas (~304)

This holy Martyr was an Egyptian and a soldier during the reigns of Diocletian and Maximian. Though he was known for his valor in combat, he renounced his soldier's rank when his legion was ordered to seize Christians in north Africa. Fleeing to the mountains, he dwelt there for some time in silence and solitude, devoting his days to prayer. In time, he presented himself at a pagan festival, denounced the idols and declared himself a Christian. For this he was handed over to the governor of the city, who subjected him to horrible tortures and finally had him beheaded. Some faithful retrieved part of his relics and gave them honorable burial near Lake Mareotis, about thirty miles from Alexandria. The church built over his tomb became a place of pilgrimage not only for countless Egyptians but for Christians all over the world: evidence has been found of journeys to his shrine from as far away as Ireland.

The *Synaxarion* gives an account of the Saint's intervention in the Second World War: "In June 1942, during the North-Africa campaign that was decisive for the outcome of the Second World War, the German forces under the command of General Rommel were on their way to Alexandria, and happened to make a halt near a place which the Arabs call El-

Alamein after Saint Menas. An ancient ruined church there was dedicated to the Saint; and there some people say he is buried. Here the weaker Allied forces including some Greeks confronted the numerically and militarily superior German army, and the result of the coming battle seemed certain. During the first night of engagement, Saint Menas appeared in the midst of the German camp at the head of a caravan of camels, exactly as he was shown on the walls of the ruined church in one of the frescoes depicting his miracles. This astounding and terrifying apparition so undermined German morale that it contributed to the brilliant victory of the Allies. The Church of Saint Menas was restored in thanksgiving and a small monastery was established there."

#### Our Righteous Father Theodore the Studite (826)

"Saint Theodore the Studite was born in Constantinople in 759; his pious parents were named Photinus and Theoctiste. He assumed the monastic habit in his youth, at the monastery called Sakkoudion, and became abbot there in 794. About the year 784 he was ordained deacon, and later presbyter by the most holy Patriarch Tarasius. On joining the brotherhood of the Monastery of Studium (which was named after its founder Studius, a Roman consul), the Saint received the surname "Studite." He proved to be a fervent zealot for the traditions of the Fathers and contested even unto death for the sake of his reverence for the holy icons. He endured three exiles because of his pious zeal. During the third one, to which he was condemned by the Iconoclast autocrat, Leo the Armenian, he endured courageously being beaten and bound and led from one dark dungeon to another for seven whole years. Finally he was recalled from exile by Michael the Stutterer. Receiving thus a small respite from his labours of long endurance, he reposed in the Lord on November 11, 826, a Sunday, while his disciples, who stood round about him, chanted the 118th Psalm. Some say that after receiving the immaculate Mysteries, he himself began chanting this psalm. And on reaching the verse, "I will never forget Thy statutes, for in them hast Thou quickened me" (v. 93) he gave up his spirit, having lived for sixty-seven years. In addition to his other sacred writings, he composed, with the collaboration of his brother Joseph, almost the whole of the compunctionate book of the Triodion." (*Great Horologion*)

St Theodore helped to establish the Studion (or Stoudion) Monastery in Constantinople, and was its Abbot. Under his guidance the Stoudion Monastery became the leading center of Orthodox piety and Byzantine culture of its time. The monks lived a radically common life: they did not even have their own cells, but slept in large dormitories.

#### NOVEMBER 12

#### Our Father among the Saints Martin, Bishop of Tours (397)

This holy and beloved Western Saint, the patron of France, was born in Pannonia (modern-day Hungary) in 316, to a pagan military family stationed there. Soon the family returned home to Italy, where Martin grew up. He began to go to church at the age of ten, and became a catechumen. Though he desired to become a monk, he first entered the army in obedience to his parents.

One day, when he was stationed in Amiens in Gaul, he met a poor man shivering for lack of clothing. He had already given all his money as alms, so he drew his sword, cut his soldier's cloak in half, and gave half of it to the poor man. That night Christ appeared to him, clothed in the half-cloak he had given away, and said to His angels, "Martin, though still a catechumen, has clothed me in this garment." Martin was baptised soon afterward. Though he still desired to become a monk, he did not obtain his discharge from the army until many years later, in 356.

He soon became a disciple of St Hilary of Poitiers (commemorated January 13), the "Athanasius of the West." After traveling in Pannonia and Italy (where he converted his mother to faith in Christ), he returned to Gaul, where the Arian heretics were gaining much ground. Not long afterward became Bishop of Tours, where he shone as a shepherd of the Church: bringing pagans to the faith, healing the sick, establishing monastic life throughout Gaul, and battling the Arian heresy so widespread throughout the West. Finding the episcopal residence too grand, he lived in a rude, isolated wooden hut, even while fulfilling all the duties of a Bishop of the Church.

His severity against heresy was always accompanied by love and kindness toward all: he once traveled to plead with the Emperor Maximus to preserve the lives of some Priscillianist heretics whom the Emperor meant to execute.

As the holy Bishop lay dying in 397, the devil appeared to tempt him one last time. The Saint said, "You will find nothing in me that belongs to you. Abraham's bosom is about to receive me." With these words he gave up his soul to God.

He is the first confessor who was not a martyr to be named a Saint in the West. His biographer, Sulpitius Severus, wrote of him: "Martin never let an hour or a moment go by without giving himself to prayer or to reading and, even as he read or was otherwise occupied, he never ceased from prayer to God. He was never seen out of temper or disturbed, distressed or laughing. Always one and the same, his face invariably shining with heavenly joy, he seemed to have surpassed human nature. In his mouth was nothing but the Name of Christ and in his soul nothing but love, peace and mercy."

*Note: St Martin is commemorated on this day in the Greek and Slavic Synaxaria; his commemoration in the West, where he is*

*especially honored, is on November 11.*

**Our Father among the Saints John the Merciful, Patriarch of Alexandria (619)**

He was the son of a noble family in Cyprus. He married and had several children, but when his wife and children all died at nearly the same time, he took his loss as a call to forsake worldly cares, and committed his life entirely to God. In time he was consecrated Archbishop of Alexandria, where he became known for his zeal for the Orthodox faith and his struggles against the various heresies that prevailed in Egypt at that time. Most of all, though, he was known for the amazing purity of his generosity and compassion toward all.

On the day of his elevation to the Patriarchate, he ordered a careful census of his "masters," as he called the poor and beggars. It was found that there were 7,500 indigents in the city, and St John ordered that all of them be clothed and fed every day out of the Church's wealth. In his prayers he would say "We will see, Lord, which of us will win this contest: You, who constantly give me good gifts, or I, who will never stop giving them away to the poor. For I have nothing that does not come to me by Thy mercy, which upholds my life."

His lack of judgment in giving to the poor sometimes dismayed those around him. Once a wily beggar came to John four times in four different disguises, receiving alms each time. When the holy Patriarch was told of this, he ordered that the man be given twice as much, saying "Perhaps he is Jesus my Savior, who has come on purpose to put me to the test." Still, the more generously he gave, the more generously God granted gifts to the Church, so that money was never lacking either for the poor or for the Church's own real needs. One of the clergy once gave only a third of what the Patriarch instructed to a rich man who had fallen into poverty, thinking that the Church's treasury could not afford to give so much. Saint John then revealed to him that a noblewoman who had planned to give an enormous gift to the Church had, shortly thereafter, given only a third of what she originally planned.

Once, when he was serving the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral, the Patriarch stopped just before the consecration, instructed the deacon to repeat the litanies, and sent for one of his clergy who bore a grudge against him and would not come to church. When the man came, the Patriarch prostrated himself before him and, with tears, begged his forgiveness. When they were reconciled, he returned to the altar and proceeded with the service.

Though the Patriarch lived in a well-appointed palace befitting his rank, he owned no property and lived in a humble cell within the palace. A godly citizen, knowing his poverty, once gave him a fine blanket. The Saint immediately sold the blanket and gave the proceeds to the poor. The donor, however, found his gift for sale in a shop, bought it, and gave it again to the Patriarch. The Patriarch again sold it, and the donor again found it and gave it. The Synaxarion says, "As neither of them would give in, the bed-cover passed through their hands a good many times and was the means whereby John indirectly prevailed on the rich man to give away a great fortune to the poor."

Despite his generosity, the Patriarch was firm with the Monophysite heretics. Though he gave them all that he could whenever they were in need, he instructed the Orthodox faithful never to worship or pray with them.

At his own request, the Patriarch returned to Cyprus where, in 619, he died at the age of 64. In his last hours, he gave thanks to God that nothing remained of the riches of which he had been given stewardship for the sake of the poor.

**Our Holy Father Nilus the Ascetic of Sinai (430)**

He served as Prefect of Constantinople during the reign of the Emperor Theodosius. He was married and had two children, a son and a daughter. Despising their eminent worldly position, Nilus and his wife agreed to take up the monastic life in Egypt, she taking their daughter to a women's monastery, he taking their son to Mount Sinai. Together Nilus and his Theodoulos lived in *hesychia* on the slopes of the mountain with the other monks, who spent their lives in solitude, only gathering once a week to partake of the Mysteries. One day some Saracen raiders attacked the monks, killing many and capturing others; Nilus' own son Theodoulos was among those taken. Nilus, to overcome his sorrow at losing his son, redoubled his prayers and ascetical labors, and became widely-known for his gifts of prophecy and discernment. He wrote more than a thousand letters and spiritual treatises, including some defending his spiritual father St John Chrysostom, who had been unjustly exiled.

After many years at Mt Sinai, St Nilus found his long-lost son alive. Father and son together were ordained to the priesthood by the Bishop of Elusas, who had been caring for Theodoulos. Saint Nilus reposed in peace around the year 430. His relics were later returned to Constantinople and venerated at the Church of the Orphanage.

**St Nilus the Myrrh-Gusher of Mt Athos (1651)**

He was born around the end of the sixteenth century in southern Greece. At an early age he entered into monastic life and in time found an isolated cave on the southern cliffs of Mt Athos, devoting his days to prayer, unknown to almost everyone. He reposed in peace in 1651 and was buried near his cave. A fragrant myrrh flowed from his body so copiously that it formed a stream flowing into the sea below; many people came in boats to collect the myrrh, which healed many ailments. One of his disciples, disturbed by the steady procession of visitors, complained in prayer to the Saint, and the flow of myrrh



instantly stopped, never to resume.

## NOVEMBER 13

### † Our Father among the Saints John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople (407)

This greatest of Christian orators is commemorated not only today, but as one of the Three Holy Hierarchs (with St Basil the Great and St Gregory the Theologian) on January 30.

He was born in Antioch to pious parents around 345. His mother was widowed at the age of twenty, and devoted herself to rearing her son in piety. He received his literary and oratorical training from the greatest pagan teachers of the day. Though an illustrious and profitable career as a secular orator was open to him, he chose instead to dedicate himself to God. He lived as a monk from 374 to 38, eventually dwelling as a hermit in a cave near Antioch. Here his extreme ascetic practices ruined his health, so that he was forced to return to Antioch, where he was ordained to the priesthood. In Antioch his astonishing gifts of preaching first showed themselves, earning him the epithet Chrysostomos, "Golden-mouth", by which he became universally known. His gifts became so far-famed that he was chosen to succeed St Nectarius as Patriarch of Constantinople. He was taken to Constantinople secretly (some say he was actually kidnapped) to avoid the opposition of the Antiochian people to losing their beloved preacher. He was made Patriarch of Constantinople in 398.

Archbishop John shone in his sermons as always, often censuring the corrupt morals and luxurious living of the nobility. For this he incurred the anger of the Empress Eudoxia, who had him exiled to Pontus in 403. The people protested by rioting, and the following night an earthquake shook the city, so frightening the Empress that she had Chrysostom called back. The reconciliation was short-lived. Saint John did not at all moderate the intensity of his sermons, and when the Empress had a silver statue of herself erected outside the Great Church in 403, accompanied by much revelry, the Patriarch spoke out against her, earning her unforgiving anger. In 404 he was exiled to Cucusus, near Armenia. When Pope Innocent of Rome interceded on his behalf, the imperial family only exiled him further, to a town called Pityus near the Caucasus. The journey was so difficult and his guards so cruel that the frail Archbishop gave up his soul to God before reaching his final place of exile, in 407. His last words were "Glory be to God for all things."

Saint John Chrysostom is the author of more written works than any other Church Father: his works include 1,447 recorded sermons, 240 epistles, and complete commentaries on Genesis, the Gospels of Matthew and John, the Acts of the Apostles, and all the Epistles of St Paul.

His repose was on September 14, but since that is the date of the Exaltation of the Cross, his commemoration has been transferred to this day.

## NOVEMBER 14

### † Holy Apostle Philip

He was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and a diligent student of the Law and the Prophets. When he first met Jesus, he followed Him right away and told Nathanael, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote" (John 1). After Christ's Ascension, Philip was chosen to proclaim the Gospel in Asia (the western province of Asia Minor). He traveled with Bartholomew (commemorated June 11) and his sister Mariamne, all of them joyfully enduring great sufferings and persecutions in the Lord's service. In Hierapolis in Phrygia, they healed the Governor's wife of an eye affliction, and she believed in the Lord. The Governor was so infuriated by this that he had Philip crucified upside-down. At the moment he gave up his soul to God, the ground opened, swallowing up a great many pagan priests and the Governor. Many of the surviving pagans, terrified, believed in Christ and were baptized by Bartholomew. Saint Bartholomew went on to preach the Gospel in many places; Mariamne traveled to the Jordan River, where she reposed in peace.

Among the Slavic peoples, the Nativity Fast is often called *Filipovka* since it commences immediately after this feast.

### St Gregory Palamas (1359)

The teaching of St Gregory is so fundamental to Orthodoxy that he is especially commemorated each year in Great Lent on the Sunday following the Sunday of Orthodoxy (as well as on Nov. 14); Bishop Kallistos observes in the English edition of the *Philokalia*, "his successful defence of the divine and uncreated character of the light of Tabor...[is] seen as a direct continuation of the preceding celebration, as nothing less than a renewed Triumph of Orthodoxy."

The son of a prominent family, St Gregory was born (1296) and raised in Constantinople. At about age twenty, he abandoned a promising secular career to become a monk on Mt Athos. (His family joined him en masse: two of his brothers went with him to the Holy Mountain; at the same time his widowed mother, two of his sisters, and many of the household servants also entered monastic life.) He spent the next twenty years living as a hermit, spending five days a week in complete solitude, then joining the brethren on weekends for the Divine Liturgy and its accompanying services.

Around 1335 he was called to live a much more public life in defense of the faith and spirituality of the Church. A Greek

living in Italy, Barlaam the Calabrian, had launched an attack on the hesychastic spirituality of the Church. Fundamentally, Barlaam denied that man can attain to a true vision of God Himself, or true union with Him, in this life. Gregory, recognizing in this an attack on the Christian faith itself, responded. He even left the Holy Mountain and re-settled in Constantinople so as better to wage the struggle, which had become so public that a Church Council was called to settle the issue. St Gregory's views were affirmed, and Barlaam's condemned, at the Council of Constantinople of 1341.

Though Barlaam himself returned to Italy, a series of his followers continued the attack, eventually resulting in two more Councils in 1347 and 1351, both of which affirmed the hesychasts' position. Metropolitan Hierotheos (*The Mind of the Orthodox Church*) writes that these councils have "all the marks of an Ecumenical Council." This, along with the fact that St Gregory's views are affirmed in the Synodikon of Orthodoxy (appointed to be read in churches every Sunday of Orthodoxy) and his commemoration every second Sunday of Great Lent, makes clear that his teaching is a basic and indispensable part of the Orthodox Faith.

In 1347 St Gregory was consecrated Metropolitan of Thessaloniki, where he served until his repose. (He spent a year of this period as the prisoner of Turkish pirates). Despite (or due to?) his austere monastic background, he was revered by his flock: immediately after his repose in 1359, popular veneration of him sprang up in Thessaloniki, Constantinople and Mt Athos and, in 1368, only nine years after his death, the Church officially glorified him as a saint.

St Gregory was always clear that unceasing mental prayer is not a special calling of monastics, but is possible and desirable for every Christian in every walk of life. See his *On the Necessity of Constant Prayer for all Christians*, reproduced on this site.

#### Pious Emperor Justinian and His Wife Theodora (565)

"The pious Emperor Justinian was a fervent Christian and a man of genius in every field. His long reign (527-65) was decisive period in the history of the Empire from the administrative, diplomatic, military, economic, legal, cultural and ecclesiastical points of view. He was the real founder of the Christian Empire, who brought together again the old Roman Empire that had been torn to pieces by barbarian invaders. He believed that upholding the Orthodox faith and maintaining the symphony of Church and State were essential for the well-being of the Empire. He had a deep knowledge of theology and wrote several treatises on dogmas of the faith. He forbade pagan worship in the Empire, and was unremitting in pursuit of heretics and sectarians. He did all he could to reconcile the Monophysites to the Council of Chalcedon. In 553, he summoned to Constantinople the fifth Ecumenical Council (25 July), which reaffirmed the condemnation of Nestorius and also condemned Origen.

"The splendor of the churches and of everything that testified to the divine glory was brought to a culmination in the Empire of Justinian. He rebuilt the Great Church of Saint Sophia in Constantinople where, it was said, the service of God was so wonderfully ordered that it was as if heaven had come down to earth. He made great gifts to the monasteries of Egypt and of Palestine and built the Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai. In all that he did, he had the help and support of his wife, the pious Empress Theodora. Justinian died on 14 November 565, without having been able to restore full unity to the Church, but he had set the Empire on firm foundations that would endure for centuries." (*Synaxarion*)

It was Justinian who built the great Church of the Holy Wisdom (Agia Sophia), perhaps the most magnificent Christian church. The hymn "Only-begotten Son" was inserted in the Divine Liturgy at his command, and is thought to have been composed by him.

*Note:* There is some controversy about the inclusion of Justinian in the Synaxaria. His fervent labors to reconcile the Monophysites to the Church have led some writers to conclude that he himself embraced Monophysite errors; others dispute this. Lacking the wisdom to resolve the question, we only note that he is included in Ormylia Monastery's *Synaxarion* (quoted above), but some Synaxaria have turned his commemoration into that of the Emperor Justin (518-527).

#### NOVEMBER 15

##### Beginning of the Nativity Fast

##### Our Venerable Father Paisius Velichkovsky (1794)

He was born in Ukraine in 1722, one of the many children of a priest. He attended the Ecclesiastical Academy in Kiev, but was disappointed by the worldliness, love of ease and western theological climate that he found there.

After four years he left the school and embarked on a search for a spiritual father and a monastery where he could live in poverty. He eventually found wise spiritual guides in Romania, where many of the Russian monks had fled after Peter the Great's reforms. From there he traveled to the Holy Mountain. Spiritual life was at a low ebb there also, and Plato (the name he had been given as a novice) became a hermit, devoting his days to prayer and reading the Holy Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers. After four years, a visiting Elder from Romania tonsured him a monk under the name Paisius, and advised him to live with other monks to avoid the spiritual dangers of taking up the solitary life too soon. A few brethren

from Romania arrived, seeking to make him their spiritual father, but as he felt unworthy to take on this task, all of them lived in poverty and mutual obedience. Others joined them from Romania and the Slavic countries, and in time they took up the cenobitic life, with Paisius as their reluctant abbot.

In 1763 the entire community (grown to sixty-five in number) left the Holy Mountain and returned to Romania. They were given a monastery where they adopted the Athonite rule of life. Abbot Paisius introduced the Jesus Prayer and other aspects of hesychasm to the monastic life there: before this time, they had been used mostly by hermits. The services of the Church were conducted fully, with the choirs chanting alternately in Slavonic and Romanian. The monks confessed to their Elder every evening so as not to let the sun go down on their anger, and a brother who held a grudge against another was forbidden to enter the church, or even to say the Lord's Prayer, until he had settled it.

The monastic brotherhood eventually grew to more than a thousand, divided into two monasteries. Visitors and pilgrims came from Russia, Greece and other lands to experience its holy example.

St Paisius had learned Greek while on Mt Athos, and undertook to produce accurate Slavonic translations of the writings of many of the Fathers of the Church. The Greek *Philokalia* had been published not long before, and St Paisius produced a Slavonic version that was read throughout the Slavic Orthodox world. (This is the *Philokalia* that the pilgrim carries with him in *The Way of a Pilgrim*).

The Saint reposed in peace in 1794, one year after the publication of his Slavonic *Philokalia*. The *Synaxarion* summarizes his influence: "These translations, and the influence of the Saint through the activity of his disciples in Russia, led to a widespread spiritual renewal, and to the restoration of traditional monastic life there which lasted until the Revolution of 1917."

#### NOVEMBER 16

##### † Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew

He was a Galilean, the son of Alphaeus, and was originally named Levi. He was a tax-collector (an occupation despised by the Jews of Palestine) until he met the Lord, who said to him, "Follow me." From that day he was one of the disciples.

After the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the Apostle was appointed to bring the Gospel to his fellow Jews, for whom, according to the Church's tradition, he wrote down the Gospel for the first time, in the Aramaic language, eight years after the Ascension. Some years later, this book was translated into Greek by St James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem. No copy in the original language has survived.

Later, St Matthew traveled to Parthia and the city of Hierapolis (on the Euphrates river) to proclaim the Gospel to the pagans there. One tradition holds that he reposed in peace in that region at a great age. Another tradition holds that he was martyred by a king of that region, who later repented and was baptized, taking the name Matthew. The king then cast down the idols and established the Christian faith in his realm.

When St Matthew is portrayed in icons, the likeness of a man is shown with him, one of the four living creatures spoken of in the first chapter of Ezekiel. St Irenaeus writes that the man symbolizes Christ's Incarnation.

#### NOVEMBER 17

##### Or Venerable Father Gregory the Wonderworker, Bishop of Neocaesarea (~275)

He was born to a prominent pagan family in Neocaesarea, where Christianity was at the time almost unknown. Nonetheless Gregory found and embraced the faith of Christ at an early age. His parents educated him at the finest schools of the day in Athens, Alexandria, and Beirut; he and his brother spent five years studying under the great Origen, though, the *Synaxarion* is quick to note, "They possessed enough discernment, however, to avoid certain errors into which Origen was led by the excessive boldness of his speculations about the mysteries of God."

Refusing many tempting offers of worldly position, Gregory withdrew to the wilderness to live in asceticism. However, the Archbishop of Amasia, familiar with his holiness and ability, consecrated him Bishop of Neocaesarea against his will, and Gregory in obedience took up his see at about the age of thirty.

When he entered the city as bishop, it contained only seventeen Christians. Through the Saint's tireless and grace-filled preaching, and through the steady stream of miracles that he wrought there, he brought so many to the faith that when he died, only seventeen of the city's inhabitants were still pagans.

Bishop Gregory's countless miracles were so famed that he became known to all as the Wonderworker. Once, the Most Holy Mother of God appeared to him with Saint John the Theologian and revealed divine mysteries to him directly, a grace granted to very few. Even his detractors called him a second Moses. He reposed in peace in 275.

##### Our Holy Father Longinus (4th or 5th c.)

"Our holy Father Longinus lived in the Egyptian deserts during the fourth or fifth century. Among other sayings of his, are

the following: *A dead man judges no one, and it is just the same with the man who is humble.* To someone who wanted to go to live in exile, he replied: *Unless you guard your tongue, you will not be able to live in exile wherever you go.* To someone else who wanted to live in solitude, he said: *If you do not exercise the virtues in the midst of men, still less will you be able to do so in solitude.* By his life and his words he taught love of humility as superior to all the works of asceticism, saying: *Fasting humbles the body, vigil purifies the intellect and stillness leads to the affliction that baptizes man anew and cleanses him of all sin.*

We also owe to him the famous saying: *Shed your blood and receive the Spirit.*" (*Synaxarion*)

#### Our Holy Mother Hilda, Abbess of Whitby (680)

A noble kinswoman of St Edwin, king of Northumbria (commemorated October 12), Hilda was baptized at a young age through the preaching of St Paulinus, one of the first missionaries sent from Rome to British Isles. At the age of thirty-three she renounced the world and entered monastic life. At first, she sought to enter a monastery near Paris in Gaul, but she was called back to her homeland by St Aidan, Bishop of Lindisfarne (August 31), who, discerning her already-apparent spiritual gifts, set her as Abbess of a small monastery. As her gifts of discernment and spiritual guidance became more widely-known, she led larger monasteries, finally establishing the Monastery of Whitby in 657. The Saint spent the next thirty-three years directing the Monastery, which became a beacon of Christian life throughout the British Isles and beyond. The Monastery was unusual by modern standards in that it comprised both a women's and a men's monastic house, with Mother Hilda as spiritual head of both. The community became a training-ground for priests and bishops who went on to spread the Gospel of Christ throughout Britain.

Commoners, kings and Bishop Aidan himself came regularly to her for spiritual counsel, and she was in her own lifetime regarded as the Mother of her country. For the last six years of her life she was afflicted with an unremitting burning fever, but she continued her holy work undeterred until her repose in 680. At the moment of her death, Saint Begu, in a different monastery, was awakened by a vision of Hilda's soul being borne up to heaven by a company of angels.

The *Synaxarion* concludes, "Saint Hilda, like her contemporaries Saint Etheldreda (23 June) and Saint Ebba (25 Aug.), belongs to that monastic company of women of royal birth who exercised a formative influence in the English Church of the seventh century, but she is also a rare example of a spiritual Mother, who received from God the gift of directing not only nuns but monks and bishops as well; for in the Lord Jesus there is neither male nor female, but a new creation (Gal. 3:28)."

#### Our Holy Father Nikon of Radonezh (1426)

He was born in 1350 in the town of Yuriev-in-the-fields, between Rostov and Radonezh. At a very young age he sought out St Sergius of Radonezh, seeking to be his disciple; but the Saint placed him in another monastery, where he soon became known as the 'lover of obedience' for his humility and selflessness. At last, when he was about thirty and had been ordained to the priesthood, he was able to go to Radonezh, where St Sergius, discerning his advanced spiritual state, made Nikon his cell-attendant. At the death of St Sergius, the brethren unanimously elected Nikon as their Abbot. In 1408, St Nikon was warned in an apparition that the monastery would be sacked by Tatars, so he and his monks fled with the monastery's books and sacred vessels. When they returned they found that the monastery had been burned to the ground. Setting to work immediately, they built a new monastery over the next few years. In 1422 the relics of St Sergius, which had been miraculously preserved in the Tatar attack, were installed in the new monastery church.

The *Synaxarion* concludes: "Full of years and already transported in spirit to the Kingdom of Heaven, Saint Nikon said to his disciples, 'Take me from here to the bright church prepared for me by the prayers of my spiritual father. I do not want to stay any longer here below!' When he had communicated in the holy Mysteries and blessed his brethren one by one, he cried out, 'O my soul, draw near with joy to the place that has been prepared for thy rest. Draw near with joy because Christ is calling thee!' Then he fell asleep in peace. He was laid to rest opposite the tomb of Saint Sergius. Since then he has often appeared with Saint Sergius in order to heal the sick or to protect the Holy Trinity Lavra in times of danger."

### NOVEMBER 18

#### Holy Martyr Plato (266)

He lived in Ancyra in Galatia during the reign of the Emperor Maximian. Arrested for openly confessing his faith in Christ, he was subjected to many brutal tortures and, refusing after each torment to bow to the idols, was finally beheaded.

#### Holy Martyr Romanus and the holy child who declared for Christ (305)

"Saint Romanus was a deacon and exorcist in the Church of Caesarea in Palestine. He happened to be at Antioch in 303 when the Emperor Diocletian's edicts for the general persecution of Christians were published. He could not bear to see so many Christian men, women and children denying their faith in the true God for fear of suffering. As they went to sacrifice to the idols, he ran up, consumed with zeal for righteousness, crying shame on them with a loud voice. He was immediately arrested and brought before the city Prefect. He faced interrogation boldly and to prove the stupidity of the pagan cult, he asked for a child to be brought in, taken at random from the crowd in the public square. Romanus enquired of the lad



whether it was more sensible to worship the one and only God and Creator of the world, or the many gods of the pagans. Showing himself wiser than the pagans, the child unhesitatingly decided for the God of the Christians. The Prefect flew into a rage at being made to look ridiculous and ordered the young confessor to be put to the torture straight away in the presence of his mother. The child endured the torments without flinching but told his mother he was thirsty and wanted a drink. 'O my dear son', the admirable woman answered, 'do not drink corruptible and temporal water, but keep up your courage so as to drink living and eternal water in the Kingdom of God!' The child was beheaded, and Saint Romanus was condemned to be burnt to death. He welcomed the sentence joyfully, and with a shining face was led unresistingly to the stake. Since the Emperor was in the city, the executioners awaited his decision before lighting the fire and the valiant Martyr exclaimed at the delay, 'Where is the fire that is prepared for me?' But the execution was stayed so that he could be brought before the Emperor in person. Aware that Christians rejoice over the death of a Martyr as the entrance to everlasting life, the tyrant wanted to increase the suffering of Christ's athlete by delaying the moment of deliverance. He ordered the executioners to tear out his tongue, which Romanus freely offered, and he miraculously went on praising God and encouraging the faithful after it was cut away. After this torment, he was imprisoned for a long time in chains until the Emperor's birthday. This was celebrated all over the Empire and a general release of prisoners was customary. But Romanus was not freed; with his feet crushed in the stocks, he was secretly strangled in his dungeon and thus received the adornment of martyrdom, as he had desired." (*Synaxarion*)

**Holy New Martyr Anastasius of Epirus (1750), and Daniel, whom he converted**

Anastasius and his sister were Greek peasants living in Epirus under Ottoman rule. One day a band of Turks came through their village, led by Musa, the son of the local Pasha (Governor). Musa was struck by the beauty of Anastasius' sister and tried to seize her, but Anastasius threw himself at the Turks and fought them off long enough for his sister to escape. Musa's father had Anastasius arrested and brought before him and, impressed by his courage, attempted to convert him to Islam by many means: threats, beatings, and offers of worldly honor; but Anastasius held firm and was cast into prison.

Musa was moved by the way that Anastasius bore all these trials and temptations, and wanted to know more about the Faith that sustained him. Going secretly to Anastasius' prison cell, he peered in and saw two young men of shining appearance with the prisoner. They vanished as soon as Musa entered. Anastasius told Musa that these were angels who guard and aid every Christian, especially when they suffer for Christ. He also explained in a simple way the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which enables His followers to set little value upon worldly things. Musa, deeply moved, threw himself at Anastasius' feet and asked to become a Christian. Anastasius told him to wait until the proper time, because his conversion would cause his father to persecute all the Christians under his power. A few days later, in 1750, Anastasius was beheaded by order of the Pasha.

Soon after this, Musa visited the tomb of a holy Martyr and was granted a vision of Anastasius, who appeared to him encircled in light and urged him to continue on the road to Christ. Musa fled his father's domain to the Peleponnese where he received direction in the Faith from an aged ascetic. He then traveled to Venice to be baptized without fear of reprisal by the Turks. In time he became a monk on Corfu, receiving the monastic name of Daniel. He lived there in asceticism, but the desire grew in him to taste martyrdom for Christ, so he traveled to Constantinople to declare his conversion to the Muslims. But the Christians there dissuaded him, knowing that the conversion of such a prominent Turk would, if it were known, lead to retaliation against Christians. Saint Daniel returned to Corfu, where he founded a church in honor of St Anastasius and reposed in peace.

**NOVEMBER 19**

**Holy Prophet Obadiah (Abdias)**

Obadiah's is the shortest prophetic book in the Old Testament. The scriptures tell us little of where or when he lived. Some believe that he is the Obadiah who served as steward of King Ahab's household and, when Jezebel was killing the prophets, hid a hundred of them in a cave and fed them. It is said that this Obadiah later became a disciple of the Prophet Elijah (Elias). His name means "servant of God."

**Our Holy Father Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow (1867)**

Born of a priestly family near Moscow in 1782, he entered seminary at a young age and soon distinguished himself for his piety and his scholarship of ancient languages. He was tonsured a monk, but was made a professor at the seminary in Moscow, where his expositions of the Faith, spoken and written, caused him to be regarded as a Father of the Church in his own time; many called him "the new Chrysostom."

In 1817, at the age of thirty-five, he was consecrated bishop, and in only a few years rose to the rank of Metropolitan of Moscow, the highest office in the Russian Church since Peter the Great abolished the Patriarchate. He remained Metropolitan for the rest of his life. Saint Philaret seemed literally tireless in his labors for the Church: no-one knew when he

slept, and his servant, no matter when he came to the Metropolitan's quarters, would always find him working at his desk. He worked to restore moral standards among the clergy, which had fallen into laxity. Whenever he was forced to depose a cleric, he would secretly contribute to the family's needs out of his own resources. Similarly, he used up all of his financial resources in charitable works, always taking care that his donations were kept secret. He funded the building of a large hospice for orphans and children of poor clergy families.

St Philaret gave his full support to the fifty-year project of translating the Bible into Russian, and translated several Old Testament books himself, though the project was opposed by the Tsar and by some powerful groups in the Church. He supported the work of the fathers of Optina Monastery to publish translations of the Fathers of the Church; these translations, when they appeared, contributed to a great spiritual awakening in Russia.

He reposed in peace in 1867 at the age of eighty-five.

The well-loved "Morning Prayer of Philaret of Moscow" which begins "Lord, grant me to greet the coming day in peace..." was brought into Orthodox piety by St Philaret but seems originally to have been written by Francois Fenelon, the French Quietist writer. The prayer also came to be used by the Optina Elders and is sometimes referred to as the "Morning Prayer of the Optina Elders." The prayer appears in several similar versions.

*O Lord, grant me to greet the coming day in peace. Help me in all things to rely upon Your holy will. In every hour of the day reveal Your will to me. Bless my dealings with all who surround me. Teach me to treat all that comes to me throughout the day with peace of soul, and with the firm conviction that Your will governs all. In all my deeds and words guide my thoughts and feelings. In unforeseen events let me not forget that all are sent by You. Teach me to act firmly and wisely, without embittering or embarrassing others. Give me strength to bear the fatigue of this coming day with all that it will bring. Direct my will, teach me to pray, pray You Yourself in me. Amen.*

#### Holy Martyr Barlaam of Antioch (304)

Saint Barlaam was an old man, living in Antioch during the persecution of Diocletian and Maximian. When he confessed Christ before the Governor and refused to sacrifice to the idols, he was tortured for days: his flesh was torn by iron claws and he was stretched on the rack. When these conventional tortures failed, the Governor invented a new torment: Barlaam's hand was stretched over an altar to the idols, and a burning coal with incense was put in his palm. The torturers reasoned that when pain forced him to drop the coal, they would be able to say that he had offered sacrifice to the gods. But the holy Barlaam held his hand steady and watched calmly as his hand was burnt up by the coal. At last his hand fell to the ground and the Martyr gave up his soul to God.

*In some accounts, St Barlaam survived his torments and reposed in peace. Some have held that he came from Cappadocia rather than Antioch, but this is probably incorrect. Saint John Chrysostom once delivered a homily at St Barlaam's tomb in Antioch on his feast day.*

#### Our Holy Fathers Barlaam and Joasaph of India (4th c.)

"They were Indian ascetics. Joasaph was son and heir to King Abenner. By God's providence, he was visited by the elder Barlaam, who taught him the Christian faith and baptised him. After that, the elder went off into the mountains to live in asceticism, and Joasaph remained to wrestle with many temptations in the world and to overcome them by the grace of God. Joasaph finally succeeded in bringing his father to Christ. When he had been baptised, King Abenner lived a further four years in deep repentance (for he had committed grave sins in his persecution of Christians) and then finished his earthly course and went to the better life. The young Joasaph entrusted the kingdom to his friend Barachias, and himself went off into the desert to live in asceticism for the sake of Christ. His one desire on earth was to see his spiritual father, Barlaam, once more. God, in his mercy, fulfilled his desire, and, one day, Joasaph stood before Barlaam's cave, and called: 'Bless me, Father!' The elder Barlaam lived in asceticism in the desert for seventy years, living a hundred years in all. St Joasaph handed over his kingdom at the age of twenty-five and went into the desert, where he lived a further thirty-five years. They both had great love for the Lord Jesus, brought many to the true Faith and entered into the eternal joy of their Lord." (Prologue)

*They are commemorated on August 26 on the Greek calendar.*

#### NOVEMBER 20

Forefeast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple.

#### Our Holy Father Gregory of Decapolis (342)

He was born in Iranopolis, one of the "Ten Cities" of Asia Minor. Though his parents wanted him to marry, he entered monastic life as a young man, and struggled for many years, living in reclusion under the guidance of a wise spiritual father. One day, while in prayer, he was carried away to Paradise and experienced the blessedness that the redeemed will know at the general Resurrection. The vision seemed to him only to last for an hour, but he learned from his disciple that he had been in ecstasy for four days.

Aware that the Enemy can appear as an angel of light, and that we should be suspicious of seeming revelations, he sought the counsel of his Abbot, who reassured him, and told him to give thanks to God by continuing in his ascetic labors.

Soon, he was told by revelation that he was to go forth into the world, living without an earthly home, to uphold the Orthodox faith, which was then under attack by the Iconoclasts. He traveled through Ephesus, Constantinople, Corinth, Rome, Sicily, Thessalonica, and Constantinople again, laboring in defense of the Faith and working many miracles. Usually he would stay with poor people who welcomed him into their houses, though it was forbidden by law to receive an Orthodox monk (that is, one who defended the Icons). In his last few years, afflicted by illness, he settled in Constantinople, where he reposed in peace in 832, just before the end of iconoclasm and the restoration of Orthodoxy. Since 1490, his incorrupt relics have dwelt at the Monastery of Bistritsa in Romania, where they continue to be a source of miracles for the many pilgrims who come to venerate them.

#### Our Holy Father Proclus, Archbishop of Constantinople (447)

He was a disciple and scribe of St John Chrysostom. About the year 426 he was ordained Bishop of Cyzicus, but was unable to take up his see because another had been unlawfully elected in his place, so he remained in Constantinople. Around 428, Nestorius was made Patriarch of Constantinople, and almost immediately began teaching his blasphemous doctrine that the holy Virgin could not be called Theotokos, "God-bearer," but only Christotokos, "Christ-bearer." Proclus resisted this teaching forcefully, once giving a sermon in the presence of the heretical Patriarch, defending the Orthodox teaching concerning the Theotokos. Proclus was elevated to the throne of Patriarch of Constantinople in 434, after Nestorius had been deposed and the Orthodox teaching clearly proclaimed in an Ecumenical Council. It was Proclus who persuaded the Emperor Theodosius the Younger to have the holy relics of his teacher St John Chrysostom returned to Constantinople, and who received them on their triumphal return to the city. He reposed in peace in 447.

#### NOVEMBER 21

##### The Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple in Jerusalem.

When the holy and most pure child Mary (Mariam or Miriam in Hebrew) reached the age of three, her parents, the righteous Joachim and Anna, fulfilled the vow they had made to dedicate her to God. Going in procession with a company of maidens carrying torches, they presented their child at the Temple in Jerusalem, where Zecharias the High Priest took her under his care, blessing her with these words: The Lord has glorified thy name in every generation; it is in thee that He will reveal the Redemption that he has prepared for his people in the last days. He then brought the child into the Holy of Holies something completely unheard-of, for under the Law only the High Priest was allowed to enter the Holy Place, and he only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

(In the icon of the feast, the maidens who accompany the Theotokos are shown bare-headed, as was customary for unmarried girls; but the Theotokos herself, though only three years old, wears the head-covering of a married woman to show her consecration to God.)

The holy Virgin lived in the Temple for the next nine years, devoting herself entirely to prayer. In this time she attained the utter purity of heart befitting the destined Bearer of the Most High; she became in her own person the fulfilment and condensation of all of Israel's faithfulness. Saint Gregory Palamas says that, when the Theotokos entered the Holy of Holies, the time of preparation and testing of the Old Covenant came to an end for Israel, which was now ready, in the blessed Virgin, to bring forth the Savior.

When Mary approached marriageable age, she was entrusted to the chaste widower Joseph to guard her. (The Prologue says that a life of intentional virginity was unknown among the Hebrews, so the righteous Joseph undertook the forms of marriage so as not to cause scandal among the people.)

"Wherefore the Church rejoices and exhorts all the friends of God for their part to enter into the temple of their heart, there to make ready for the coming of the Lord by silence and prayer, withdrawing from the pleasures and cares of this world." (*Synaxarion*)

#### NOVEMBER 22

##### Holy Apostle Philemon and Sts Apphia, Archippus and Onesimus

Philemon is addressed in the Epistle of the holy Apostle Paul that bears his name. He was a nobleman from Colossae; Apphia was his wife. Archippus was Bishop of Colossae. All three were disciples of the Apostle Paul. Onesimus was a pagan slave of Philemon, who stole from his master and fled to Rome. There St Paul led him to faith in Christ, and wrote the Epistle to Philemon, urging Onesimus' master to forgive him and take him back as a brother in Christ. This Philemon did, and Onesimus later became a bishop. In Greece he is venerated as the patron Saint of the imprisoned. All of these holy followers of Christ died as martyrs, stoned to death by pagans.

**Holy Martyrs Cecilia, Valerian, Tiburtius and Maximus, at Rome (3rd c.)**

Saint Cecilia was born to a prominent pagan family in Rome. In her youth she secretly became a disciple of Christ. When her parents betrothed her to a young man named Valerian, she brought him to faith in Christ and persuaded him that they should live in virginity. Valerian was baptised by Pope Urban, and in his turn went on to bring his brother Tiburtius to the Faith.

At the time, Christians in Rome were being violently persecuted, many to the point of martyrdom; Cecilia, her husband, and his brother made it their work to go out by night and secretly give pious burial to the martyrs and give charitable help to their families. Eventually, this was discovered, and the two brothers were in their own turn arrested and condemned as Christians. At the moment of their beheading, the Roman officer Maximus saw heaven open and angels come to receive their souls; he, along with several other onlookers, confessed Christ, and in his turn died under torture. Finally, Cecilia herself was arrested and, after faithfully enduring various tortures, was beheaded.

Because St Cecilia is described in her first biography as a lover of music, she is honored as patroness of church music in the West, and is often shown playing the organ.

**Holy Prince and Passion-Bearer Peter Yaropolk (1086)**

"Saint Peter Yaropolk, the son of Grand Prince Iziaslav Yaroslavovich, took part in all his father's campaigns as an obedient son, and went with him into exile. The meek and humble Prince had much to suffer from the members of his family, but he always forgave them. Every day he earnestly prayed to be counted worthy of holy death, like Saints Boris and Gleb (24 July), in order to be cleansed of his many sins by the shedding of his blood and to be freed from the vanity of this world. He was assassinated on 21 November 1086." (*Synaxarion*)

*The term 'Passion-bearer' is used in the Russian Church for Saints who, though they were not killed for their faith and are therefore not strictly Martyrs, suffered death with resignation and in the spirit of the Gospel. Saints Boris and Gleb are the first and model Passion-bearers.*

**Holy Grand Prince and Martyr Michael of Tver (1318)**

He was born in Tver in 1272 to Prince Yaroslav Yaroslavovich, who was the brother of St Alexander Nevsky (November 23). Michael was brought up in the faith by his mother, who later became a nun. Such was his fervor that from childhood he was certain that he must end his life either as a monk or a martyr. He succeeded his brother as Prince of Tver in 1285, and later became Grand Prince of Vladimir, the Russian capital during the Mongol conquest.

When Prince Michael lost the throne of Vladimir through the plotting of his kinsman Prince George, his advisers urged him to go to war against George; but he preferred to lose power rather than to subject his people to bloodshed. When George attacked Tver itself, Michael took up arms to defend it, and was victorious. One of his prisoners was Princess Agatha, George's wife and the sister of the Tatar Khan. When she died in captivity, the full wrath of both George and the Tatars was aroused against Michael. The Prince knew that the only way to avert catastrophe for his people was to go to the Golden Horde to be judged at the Khan's court. Michael's kinsmen and advisors knew that such a course would surely lead to his death, but none were able to dissuade him from going to save his people.

Michael was kept prisoner with a wooden yoke around his neck, and subjected to many humiliations by the Tatars. But as he awaited his sentence he remained calm, spending his days in chanting the Church services and the Psalms. On the night of 21-22 November he had a revelation of his impending death. He attended the Liturgy, took Communion, and embraced his family. Then, opening the Psalter, he read the words *Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He will sustain thee: He will not permit the righteous to be moved* (Ps 54). He then calmly greeted his kinsman George and his minions, who pounced on the Prince and ran him through with swords. Prince Michael's relics were returned to Moscow, then translated to Tver in 1320. When the city was besieged in 1549, St Michael appeared to the inhabitants in the form of a mounted knight, armed for battle.

**NOVEMBER 23****St Alexander Nevsky (1263)**

"Nevsky" means "of the Neva (River)." This holy prince guided Russia through one of the most fragile and difficult periods of its history. Most of the nation was crushed beneath the 200-year domination of the Tatars, who burned Kiev and established their central territory (known as the Golden Horde) there. At the same time, Teutonic and Swedish Christian invaders sought to conquer from the West, and Pope Innocent IV of Rome was seeking, by conversion or conquest, to pervert the Orthodox faith of the Russian people. At the same time, constant warfare among petty Russian lords made unified work on behalf of the people almost impossible. In this harsh climate, Prince Alexander of Novgorod shone as that rare thing: a truly Christian ruler. In time of famine he opened his treasury to all who were in need. Several times he traveled to the Golden Horde, and even to Mongolia, to plead on behalf of his people for relief from Tatar taxation and oppression.



Soon after he became prince of Novgorod in 1236, his kingdom was attacked by the forces of Sweden and Lithuania along with the Teutonic Knights, a semi-monastic military order pledged to force the Slavic and Baltic peoples to accept Roman Catholicism. In 1240, the night before his small army was to face the much more powerful invaders, Saint Alexander was granted a vision: Saints Boris and Gleb appeared in a boat on the Neva River, urging angelic oarsmen to hurry to the aid of "Alexander their kinsman." Encouraged, Alexander and his small force crushed their adversaries in battle.

When he was summoned for the first time to pay homage to the Khan, he went as if to his own death, for the Khan required his subjects to submit to pagan rites or die, and the prince knew that he would never betray the Faith of Christ. Before the Khan, he said "My liege, I do homage in that God has granted you sovereignty, but I am unable to worship idols because I am a Christian and adore the one and only God in three Persons, the Maker of heaven and earth." The Khan, knowing of his valor and impressed by his integrity, received him as an honored guest.

In another visit to the Golden Horde, the prince averted a Tatar invasion in retribution for an uprising by another prince, dug deeply into his treasury to ransom prisoners, and was given rule over all of Russia.

Threats from the West continued. Prince Alexander firmly opposed the missionaries sent into his realms by Pope Innocent IV of Rome; in response the Pope launched what the *Synaxarion* calls a "veritable Crusade" against the Prince. In 1256 an alliance of Swedes, Danes, Finns and Teutonic Knights attempted to take Novgorod, but were again repulsed by Alexander, who for a time occupied Finland.

In 1260, the holy Prince made a final journey to appeal to the Tatars, who had increased the tribute levied on the Russian people, and were carrying those unable to pay into slavery. Having obtained a reduction of tribute and relief for his people, he headed home but, on the journey home, exhausted and ill from his labors, he gave up his soul to God in 1263, having served his people without rest until the end. On his deathbed he received the monastic Great Schema and the new name Alexis.

"Many miracles and apparitions have taken place at his tomb, especially on the eves of the great Russian victories over the Tatars in 1380, 1552 and 1572. The sanctity of the holy Prince was formally recognized by the Church in 1380, when his incorrupt relics were uncovered. In the eighteenth century, Peter the Great proclaimed Saint Alexander Nevsky Protector of the Russian people." (*Synaxarion*)

#### Our Holy Father Amphilocus, Bishop of Iconium (395)

"A fellow-countryman and friend of St Basil the Great and other great saints of the fourth century, Amphilochius early forsook the bustle of the world and withdrew to a cave where, as a solitary, he lived in asceticism for forty years. The episcopal throne in Iconium then fell empty, and Amphilochius was chosen in a wonderful way and consecrated as Bishop of Iconium. He was a marvellous shepherd and a great defender of the purity of the Orthodox faith, and took part in the Second Ecumenical Council in 381. He fought zealously against Macedonius, and against the Arians and the Eunomians. He personally begged Theodosius the Great to drive the Arians out of every city in the Empire, but the Emperor did not comply with his request. After a few days, Amphilochius came before the Emperor again. When the bishop was taken into the presence-chamber, the Emperor was sitting on his throne with his son Arcadius, whom he had taken as co-Emperor, sitting at his right hand. Entering the room, Amphilochius did reverence to Theodosius, but ignored Arcadius as though he were not there. Infuriated by this, the Emperor Theodosius commanded that Amphilochius be instantly driven from court. The saint then said to the Emperor: 'Do you see, O Emperor, how you do not tolerate a slight paid to your son? In the same way, God the Father does not tolerate dishonour paid to His Son, turning with loathing from those who blaspheme against Him, and being angered at that accursed Arian heresy.' Hearing this, the Emperor understood the reason for Amphilochius's seeming disrespect towards his son, and marvelled at his wisdom and daring. Among many other works, Amphilochius wrote several books on the Faith. He entered into rest in 395 in great old age, and went to immortal life." (*Prologue*)

Saint Amphilocus was a kinsman of St Gregory the Theologian: his father's sister Nonna (August 5) was St Gregory's mother. Amphilocus himself was a lifelong friend of all three of the great Cappadocian Fathers: Sts Basil, Gregory the Theologian and Gregory of Nyssa.

#### St Columban, Abbot of Luxeuil (615)

Born in Ireland around 540, he joined the great monastic movement that flowered in Ireland following the missionary work of St Patrick and his disciples. After spending some years in Irish monasteries, he made pilgrimage to Gaul with twelve other monks, planning to preach the Gospel wherever they were led. The king of Burgundy, learning of their holiness, gave them land, where in time three large monasteries were founded with St Columban as their spiritual Father. Here the Saint established the rule that became normal for many monasteries in the West: in addition to its severe penitential disciplines, it included provision for some monks to be in prayer at every hour of the day and night — *laus perennis* (unceasing praise), as it was called. (This practice was also adopted by the Monastery of the Unsleeping Ones (*Akoimisti*) in Constantinople). Eventually, political strife in Gaul led to the expulsion of the Irish monks, and Columban made his way to Italy through

Germany, proclaiming the Gospel, instructing his spiritual children by letter, and battling against Arianism, which flourished throughout the Germanic lands. He settled in a monastery in the Appenines, where he reposed in peace in 615.

#### NOVEMBER 24

##### Holy Hieromartyr Clement, Bishop of Rome (~100)

He was instructed in the Faith of Christ by St Peter himself, and may be the Clement mentioned by the Apostle Paul as a fellow-worker in Philippians 4:3. He was consecrated Bishop of Rome about the year 91; some traditions call him the first Bishop of Rome, others the third after Sts Linus and Anaclethus. (This is not necessarily inconsistent: in the Apostolic age, the offices of Elder and Bishop were not strictly distinguished, and the three bishops may have served at the same time or by turns.) He is the author of the Epistle of Clement, which was so highly esteemed in the early Church that it is often found in early versions of the New Testament. The holy Bishop effected countless conversions in Rome, even bringing the Prefect Sisinius and his wife Theodora to the Faith after miraculously healing them of blindness. The bishop's success so angered the Emperor Trajan that he had Clement exiled to the Crimea, on the far eastern frontier of the Empire. There the holy bishop continued to work wonders of evangelism, founding seventy-five churches in one year and bringing countless pagans to faith in Christ. Finally, to put a stop to the Saint's work, the Governor of the region had him cruelly tortured, then thrown into the Black Sea with an anchor around his neck.

More than 700 years later, in 860, St Cyril (commemorated May 11) arrived in the Crimea, sent by St Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople. He found the relics of St Clement faithfully preserved there and brought part of them back to Constantinople.

##### Holy Hieromartyr Peter of Alexandria (312)

Saint Peter was Bishop of Alexandria for twelve years. It was he who excommunicated Arius. When some of Arius' followers appealed to the Bishop to restore Arius to the communion of the Church, they were surprised by the bishop's vehement refusal, for the heretic had not yet clearly and publicly made known his blasphemous teaching that the Son is a creation of the Father. The holy bishop then revealed to these followers a vision he had seen, in which Christ appeared to him as a child wearing a garment torn in half from head to foot. When St Peter asked the Lord who had rent His garment, he said that it was Arius, who must not be received back into communion.

The holy bishop was beheaded during the reign of Maximinus. He is called the "Seal of the Martyrs" because he was the last Bishop of Alexandria to suffer martyrdom under the pagan Emperors.

##### Holy Martyr Mercurius of Smolensk (1238)

He was a soldier from Byzantium, one of the defenders of Smolensk when it was besieged by the Tatars in 1238. One day the Mother of God appeared to Mercurius and told him that the Tatars were preparing a surprise attack — and, further, that he must take up arms and attack the enemy singlehandedly. Placing all his trust in God, the lone soldier threw himself against the Tatar host crying 'Most Holy Mother of God, help me!' He was quickly surrounded and cut down, and it appeared that his action had been as foolhardy as it had seemed, when a woman at the head of a glorious host, all of them surrounded by light, appeared and threw back the Tatar army. The next morning the people of Smolensk found the ground covered with the bodies of their enemies. They buried Mercurius in the Cathedral, where he has been venerated as a Martyr ever since.

#### NOVEMBER 25

##### *Leavetaking of the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple*

##### † Holy Great Martyr and Most Wise Catherine of Alexandria and those with her (305)

"Saint Catherine, who was from Alexandria, was the daughter of Constatas (or Cestus). She was an exceedingly beautiful maiden, most chaste, and illustrious in wealth, lineage, and learning. By her steadfast understanding, she utterly vanquished the passionate and unbridled soul of Maximinus, the tyrant of Alexandria; and by her eloquence, she stopped the mouths of the so-called philosophers who had been gathered to dispute with her. She was crowned with the crown of martyrdom in the year 305. Her holy relics were taken by Angels to the holy mountain of Sinai, where they were discovered many years later; the famous monastery of Saint Catherine was originally dedicated to the Holy Transfiguration of the Lord and the Burning Bush, but later was dedicated to Saint Catherine." (*Great Horologion*)

So great was St Catherine's eloquence that the fifty orators assigned to debate her recognized their error and, as a body, asked for baptism, for which Maximinus condemned them all to death. The Saint was then subjected to torture on a specially-constructed spiked wheel (with which she is usually shown in her icon), but an angel loosed her and miraculously smashed the wheel. Maximinus' own wife and 200 soldiers, seeing her sufferings and the nobility with which she bore them, were moved to profess their faith in Christ and their yearning to be baptized. All of them were put to death. Finally Catherine herself was led outside the walls of Alexandria and, after a prayer of thanksgiving to God, was beheaded.

**Great Martyr Mercurius (~259)**

He was born in the province of Asia, to a Scythian who had secretly converted to Christianity. Like his parents, he was a secret follower of Christ, serving as a legionary in the Roman army during the reign of the Emperor Decius. During a campaign, an Angel appeared to him, gave him a sword and told him to go into battle trusting in Christ's help. Mercurius plunged into battle, fought his way alone through the enemy lines, and reached the barbarian commander Rigas, whom he killed. Upon the death of their chief the barbarians scattered and the victory was won.

The Emperor, hearing of the young soldier's exploits, promoted him to a position at court. There, lulled by the pleasures and honors of the court, Mercurius forgot his duties to Christ his King. One night the same Angel who had given him the sword appeared to him once again and reminded him of the sword that Christ had given him, an emblem of the battle of martyrdom that he was about to enter. The next day Mercurius, now returned to his senses, refused to offer sacrifice to the gods. When called before the Emperor, he boldly proclaimed Christ and threw off his badges of office. He was thrown in prison and subjected to cruel tortures, all of which he bore with peace and joy, encouraged by the Angel who appeared to him again to offer comfort and encouragement. After long torment he was beheaded in Caesarea in Cappadocia, at the age of twenty-five.

**NOVEMBER 26****Our Holy Father Innocent, Bishop of Irkutsk (1731)**

He was descended from a noble family near Chernigov. He became a monk at the Lavra of the Kiev Caves in 1706 and in 1721 was consecrated bishop. He was sent as a missionary to China but, due to political complications, could not gain entry into the country and settled temporarily near Lake Baikal in Siberia. He and his companions soon ran out of money and were forced to live for a time on alms and by day-labor. Rather than become discouraged, Saint Innocent made use of this time to learn the native language and found a school for the local Mongol people, many of whom he brought to the faith.

In 1722 he was appointed Bishop of Irkutsk, a diocese that covered all the huge area of eastern Siberia. At the time of his appointment there were only about thirty churches in the whole diocese. For ten years the bishop devoted himself to converting the Mongol peoples, preaching to them and catechizing them in their own language. At the same time he worked for moral reform among the Russian Orthodox people of the region. As bishop, he lived in the Monastery of the Ascension in Irkutsk, where he established a firm ascetical life, in which he himself took a full part. He spent every night in prayer, meditation on the writings of the Fathers, and preparing sermons in both Russian and the local languages.

Under the strain of the cruel Siberian climate the Saint fell ill and reposed in 1731. Many miracles take place to this day at his tomb. Among the people of Siberia he is honored as highly as Saint Nicholas and counted as the Enlightener of their land.

**Our Holy Father Alypius the Stylite (~607)**

He was from Adrianopolis in Bythynia, and took up the ascetical life at a young age. After many spiritual struggles he took up residence on a pillar, where he dwelt for fifty-three years. Crowds came to seek his intercession and counsel, and in time a women's monastery was founded near the pillar. At times an unearthly light was seen to radiate from the top of the pillar, accompanied by thunder and lightning. He owned nothing, and once threw his only tunic down to a poor man in need, leaving himself completely exposed to the elements until a recluse dwelling nearby saw his condition and came to his help.

After fifty-three years, Alypius suffered a stroke which paralyzed half his body, but he continued to live on the pillar for another fourteen years, giving up his soul to God at the age of ninety-nine.

**St Nikon Metanoite ("Repent!") (~1000)**

He was born about 930 to a pious and wealthy family near Trebizond. Once, making an inspection of the family's estates, he was so affected by the wretched conditions of the poor fieldworkers that he despaired of happiness in this world and determined to live a monastic life.

After years spent in a monastery, where he shone in obedience, prayer and self-denial, the Saint was given leave to travel in the ministry of the Gospel of Christ. For three years he wandered the East, without home or possessions, crying to everyone he met, "Repent!" and proclaiming with tears the message of salvation in Christ. He then spent seven years in Crete, then went to Greece, walking barefoot from place to place, preaching repentance and becoming so well known that he acquired the nickname "Metanoite," meaning "Repent!"

After driving a great plague from Sparta through his prayers, he settled near that city, building a great church dedicated to Christ the Savior, and living in the church for the remainder of his life. In time, a monastery was attached to the church for his disciples. His last counsel to his disciples was: "Flee pride, cleave to humility; do not despise the poor; keep clear of all evil, of all envy and of the remembrance of wrongs; forgive your brethren. Go regularly to church and confess your sins often to the priests and spiritual fathers. If you keep to these counsels, I will never abandon you." He then gave his soul back

to God.

Saint Nikon was immediately venerated as a saint by the people of Sparta, and is regarded as the protector of the city, where his relics are venerated to this day.

#### Holy New Martyr George of Chios (1897)

He was born of Christian parents on Chios. As a boy he was caught stealing melons from a garden with some companions. Brought before the Turkish judge, in fear of punishment he agreed to become a Muslim with the name Ahmed. (This was common practice under the Turkokratia: a Christian brought before the courts would be offered his freedom in return for conversion to Islam. Many gave in.) He returned home, weeping and lamenting his apostasy, and his parents put him (now aged ten) in the care of a good Christian woman to strengthen him in the faith and hide him from the Turkish authorities. At the age of twenty-one he was engaged to a young woman of the town, but quarreled with her brother who, knowing George's past, went to the authorities and denounced him as an apostate from Islam. George was imprisoned and tortured, but rather than breaking him down his torments strengthened his love of Christ, and he resolved to offer up his life for Him. The priests and faithful of the town held all-night vigil, praying God to give courage to His New Martyr. At daybreak, George was led to the place of execution, saying over and over again the names of the Lord Jesus and his blessed Mother. He was shot, then beheaded, joining the ranks of the holy Martyrs.

#### NOVEMBER 27

##### Holy Great Martyr James the Persian (421)

"This Saint was from the city of Bythlaba and was of noble birth; he was the closest and most honoured friend of Isdiger (or Yazdegerd) I, King of Persia (reigned 399-420). Though a Christian from his youth, James renounced Christ because he was allured by the King's friendship and flatteries. When his mother and his wife learned of this, they declared to him by that they would have nothing more to do with him, since he had preferred a glory that is temporal to the love of Christ. Wounded in soul by these words and coming to himself, the Saint wept over his error, and repudiated the worship of the idols. Therefore, becoming exceedingly wroth, the King — this was Bahram (or Varahran) V (reigned 421-438), Isdiger's son and successor — condemned him to a most bitter death, the likes of which not even a brute beast was ever condemned to: that is, his body was dismembered at every joint of his arms and legs. And so, when he had been cut asunder limb by limb to his very hips and shoulders, the courageous Martyr was finally beheaded, in the year 421." (*Great Horologion*)

##### *Repose of Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) (1992) (Nov. 14 OC)*

*Though he has not been glorified by the Church, Fr Lazarus was a pioneer and exemplar of Orthodoxy in the West.*

He was born in England in 1902. In his early manhood he moved to western Canada, where he worked as a farm laborer for several years. While working in Alberta, he sensed a call to become a missionary and went to an English missionary college for five years.

Sad to say, our sources are unclear about how he came to the Orthodox faith from this unlikely beginning. But in 1934 he spent seven weeks on Mt Athos, then lived as a monk in Yugoslavia. He was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Feofan (Russian Orthodox Church Abroad), then sent to Palestine to serve the Russian Mission in Jerusalem.

In 1948, the new State of Israel gave the Mission's property to the Soviet Union and the mission was left dispossessed. Fr Lazarus served as priest to the Russian Convent in Ain Karim and Transjordan, then was sent to India in 1952, where he helped in Orthodox missionary work for twenty years. Several of his books and translations, such as his biography/s of St Seraphim of Sarov, were written while he lived in India. While there, he met Mother Gavrilia of Greece, whose beautiful biography *Ascetic of Love* includes good descriptions of him during his life in India. Though very strict in his Orthodoxy, he was flexible in externals: in India he wore a white rather than a black cassock, because black clothing had offensive connotations to the Indian people.

In 1972 Fr Lazarus was called to Greece, then in 1974 to Australia, where he served for nine years. In 1983 he moved to California in answer to call from Fr Peter Gillquist to assist members of the former 'Evangelical Orthodox Church' in their move to Orthodoxy. In 1989 he moved to Alaska, where he continued this work. He reposed in Eagle River, Alaska in 1992. Following is an excerpt from an account of his last days by members of his community in Eagle River:

"Father always signed his name with TWA, 'Traveling With Angels'. A few days before his death, after battling cancer many years, faithfully using the Jesus Prayer as the medicine for his affliction, the Archangel Michael appeared to help him. His final journey homeward had begun, TWA... 'the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.' (2 Timothy 4: 6-8)."

#### NOVEMBER 28

##### Our Holy Father, Confessor and Martyr Stephen the New (767)



He was born in Constantinople in 715 to pious parents named John and Anna. His mother had prayed often to the most holy Theotokos to be granted a son, and received a revelation from our Lady that she would conceive the son she desired. When the child was born, she named him Stephen, following a prophecy of the Patriarch St Germanos (commemorated May 12). Stephen entered monastic life as a youth, and so distinguished himself in asceticism and virtue that the hermits of Mt Auxentius appointed him their leader at a young age.

'During the reign of Constantine V (741-775), Stephen showed his love of Orthodoxy in contending for the Faith... Beside being a fierce Iconoclast, Constantine raised up a ruthless persecution of monasticism. He held a council in 754 that anathematized the holy icons. Because Saint Stephen rejected this council, the Emperor framed false accusations against him and exiled him. But while in exile Saint Stephen performed healings with holy icons and turned many away from Iconoclasm. When he was brought before the Emperor again, he showed him a coin and asked whose image the coin bore. "Mine," said the tyrant. "If any man trample upon thine image, is he liable to punishment?" asked the Saint. When they that stood by answered yes, the Saint groaned because of their blindness, and said if they thought dishonouring the image of a corruptible king worthy of punishment, what torment would they receive who trampled upon the image of the Master Christ and of the Mother of God? Then he threw the coin to the ground and trampled on it. He was condemned to eleven months in bonds and imprisonment. Later, he was dragged over the earth and was stoned, like Stephen the First Martyr; wherefore he is called Stephen the New. Finally, he was struck with a wooden club on the temple and his head was shattered, and thus he gave up his spirit in the year 767.' (*Great Horologion*)

#### NOVEMBER 29

Holy Martyr Paramon and his 370 Companions (~250)

'Akylinus, the Governor of Bithynia in the reign of the Emperor Decius (249-51), was leaving for the hot springs at Bisaltia, when he decided to make 370 Christians from Nicomedia, who had been imprisoned on his orders, worship in the temple of Isis. On their refusal to do so, they were all beheaded. Seeing this massacre, the righteous Paramon cried out: 'What a wicked deed to slaughter so many righteous men, and strangers moreover, as if they were animals.' The Governor heard these words and had Paramon seized and taken with him under guard. On the road he was mistreated in various ways by the soldiers. Some of them struck him with their spears, others excised his tongue and other members, and he was finally put to death in the presence of the Governor.' (*Synaxarion*)

Note: of the various persecutions launched by the pagan Emperors before St Constantine, the persecution under Decius was probably the fiercest and bloodiest.

Our Holy Father Pitirim of Egypt (4th c.)

'Abba Pitirim directed a group of ascetics who led a very austere life in the arid mountains of the Thebaid. He was himself a disciple and third successor of Saint Anthony the Great (17 Jan.) in his hermitage. He ate no more than a little flour mixed with water twice a week, and so persevered in spiritual labours that he gained abundant graces from the Holy Spirit. Among other things, he taught that to each passion there corresponds a demon who tries to stir up that passion within us through different temptations. In order to get rid of these demons and of evil thoughts, Abba Pitirim said that we must first free our hearts from passions.' (*Synaxarion*)

#### NOVEMBER 30

† Holy, Glorious and Illustrious Apostle Andrew the First-Called

He was the brother of the Apostle Peter, from Bethsaida on the shore of Lake Gennesaret. Andrew left his fisherman's trade to become a disciple of St John the Baptist. Soon after the Forerunner had baptized Jesus, he said to Andrew and his other disciple John the Theologian, "Behold the Lamb of God!" At this, both disciples followed after Jesus. After conversing with Christ, Andrew hurried home and told his brother Simon Peter, "We have found the Messiah." For being the first to recognize Jesus as the Christ, St Andrew is called the First-Called.

After Pentecost, Andrew was appointed to preach the Gospel around the Black Sea and in Thrace and Macedonia, traveling as far as Lazica in the Caucasus. According to Slavic tradition his travels took him even further, into the land that was later to be called Russia.

In later travels the Apostle preached throughout Asia Minor with St John the Theologian, then traveled to Mesopotamia, then back to Sinope on the Black Sea, and finally to Patras in the Peloponnese, where he soon established a large community of Christians. One of his converts was Maximilla, the wife of Aegaeates, the Proconsul of that region. Aegaeates was so angered by his wife's conversion that he had the Apostle arrested and crucified head downwards on a cross in the shape of an "X." The holy Apostle rejoiced to be allowed to suffer the same death as his Master.

The holy relics of St Andrew, after various travels, were returned to Patras in 1964, where they are now venerated.

In the West, St Andrew is venerated as the patron of Scotland: in the Middle Ages, more than eight hundred churches in Scotland were dedicated to him.

**Our Venerable Father Frumentius, first Bishop of Ethiopia (4th c.)**

During the reign of St Constantine the Great, an explorer named Meropus set out to explore lands along the Red Sea, previously unknown to the Roman world. The expedition's ship was attacked by pirates and all the company killed except two young men named Frumentius and Edesius. They were sold into slavery in the court of the Ethiopian King of Axum, where they distinguished themselves so well that they became palace stewards and were able to obtain freedom of Christian worship for merchants trading in the Kingdom.

Eventually the young men returned to Roman territory, and Frumentius went to St Athanasius the Great of Alexandria to tell him of his travels and of the great thirst of the Ethiopian people for the Gospel of Christ. Saint Athanasius consecrated Frumentius as first Bishop of Abyssinia and sent him back to Axum to establish the Church in that kingdom.

Through his apostolic zeal, tireless travels, and miracles and healings, the holy Bishop was able to convert many pagans and establish many churches in Ethiopia, though the Kingdom did not become officially Christian until the sixth century. Saint Frumentius reposed in peace in his adopted country, and his relics worked many miracles.

The Church of Ethiopia traces its origin to the apostolic work of the Ethiopian eunuch baptized by the Apostle Philip in the Book of Acts, who "went on his way rejoicing" to Ethiopia and first proclaimed the Gospel there. Thus, it seems there was already a Christian presence in the country when Frumentius arrived: this may be the source of the statement in his biography that he found the Ethiopian people thirsty for the Good News.

† 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.

