

God is Wonderful in His Saints

Orthodox Saints commemorated in October

OCTOBER 1

† The Protection of Our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary

On October 1, 911, during the reign of Emperor Leo the Wise, an all-night vigil was being held at the Blachernae Church of the Mother of God in Constantinople, with many of the faithful crowding the church. St Andrew the Fool for Christ (commemorated tomorrow, October 2) was standing at the back of the church with his disciple Epiphanius. At around four in the morning, the most holy Theotokos appeared above the people, clothed in resplendent garments, surrounded by indescribable radiance, and holding a veil in her outstretched hands, as though to protect all the people. St Andrew said to Epiphanius 'Do you see how the Queen and Lady of all is praying for the whole world?' Epiphanius replied 'Yes, Father, I see it and stand in dread.' This wonderful event is recorded in Epiphanius' life of St Andrew. Because of it, the Church keeps an annual feast on this date.

Note: This feast is particularly well-loved in the Slavic churches. In 1960, the Greek church transferred its observance to October 28, in memory of the Mother of God's protection of the Greek forces holding the Albanian front against Italy in 1940.

St Romanos the Melodist of Constantinople (556)

He was born in Emessa in Syria, probably of Jewish parents. He served as a deacon in Beirut, then in Constantinople at the time of Patriarch Euphemius (490-496). He was illiterate, had no musical training, and was a poor singer; thus he was despised by many of the more cultivated clergy. One night, after Romanos had prayed to the Mother of God, she appeared to him in a dream, held out a piece of paper and told him to swallow it. On the following day, the Nativity of Christ, Romanos went to the ambon and, with an angelic voice, sang 'Today the Virgin...', which is still sung as the Kontakion of the Feast. All present were amazed at the completely unexpected beauty of the hymn and of Romanos' singing. St Romanos went on to compose more than a thousand Kontakia (which were once long hymns, not the short verses used in church today). He is almost certainly the author of the sublime Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God, which has served as the model for all other Akathists. He reposed in peace, while still a deacon of the Great Church in Constantinople. Many of his hymns were inspired by the hymns of St Ephraim of Syria.

The influence of Middle Eastern music on the hymnography of the Church is incalculable. Many of those who established the form of the Church's music were Syrians: two noted examples are St Romanos and St John of Damascus, who composed the Octoechos, the Pascha service, and the Funeral Service. Their music was in turn modeled on the music of the Hebrew temple. The Byzantine musical tradition has descended without break from the music sung in Christ's time, and presumably by Christ Himself.

Our Holy Father Gregory the Choirmaster (Domestikos) of the Great Lavra (1355)

He was a cantor at the Great Lavra on Mt Athos. Once, on the eve of Theophany, he was inspired to sing the hymn *O full of grace, thou who art the joy of all creation* instead of the usual *It is truly meet to bless thee* during the Divine Liturgy. When he did this, the most holy Theotokos appeared to him, thanked him and gave him a gold coin as a sign of her favor. The coin is still kept at the Lavra. He reposed in peace. St Gregory's hymn has been sung since that time as part of the Divine Liturgy of St Basil.

Saint Remigius, Bishop of Rheims, Apostle to the Franks (533)

He was born in 438 in northern Gaul. After devoting himself for awhile to secular and sacred learning, he withdrew to a small house near Laon, to live in reclusion and prayer. But when a bishop was needed in Rheims, the clergy and people carried him off from his hermitage and made him their bishop. He was only twenty-two years old at the time.

The holy bishop soon became renowned throughout northern Gaul. He converted heretics, brought Arian heretics back to the Orthodox Faith, cared for the many who suffered at the hands of barbarian marauders. Wherever he went, miracles attended him. He healed the sick and demonized and once, when a town was on fire, threw himself into the flames and quenched them. Birds would come to his table whenever he ate, and he would share his meal with them.

In 482 the young warrior Clovis became leader of the Frankish tribes in that region. Though he was a pagan, he knew and admired St Remigius, and was married to a Christian, St Clotilde (June 3). Once, when his army faced defeat by the Alemanni, Clovis prayed to 'the God of Clotilde and Remigius' and won a great victory. This answer to his prayers convinced him of the truth of the Christian Faith, and he asked St Remigius to instruct him. Two years later he gathered all his chieftains in Rheims to attend his baptism. The baptism was accompanied by many miracles, seen by all in attendance. Two of the king's sisters and three thousand of his lords and soldiers were baptized at the ceremony. This event is considered the birth of France as a Christian nation.

In great old age, St Remigius went blind, but miraculously recovered his sight. He reposed in peace at the age of 105, immediately after serving the Divine Liturgy.

OCTOBER 2

St Andrew the Fool for Christ (911)

St Andrew was bought as a slave by Theognostos, a wealthy citizen of Constantinople, during the reign of the Emperor Leo the Wise. Theognostos recognized Andrew's unusual ability and taught him to read and write. Despite this Andrew, obeying a divine revelation, took up the asceticism of folly for Christ, behaving as a madman all day and secretly praying most of the night. His master endeavored to have him cured of his apparent madness, having prayers read over him in church, but to no avail. Finally he discharged Andrew, who thereafter lived in absolute poverty in Constantinople, clothing himself in rags and living on the bread given him by kindly Christians. Anything that he received, beyond that needed for bare survival, he gave to beggars, usually mocking and insulting them at the same time so as not to be thanked or praised for his deeds. Such was the wholeheartedness of his prayers that he was given grace to see angels and demons, to discern the secrets of others, thereby turning them from their sins. It was he who, with his disciple Epiphanius, saw the vision of the Protecting Veil of the Mother of God (see October 1). After a life of profound ascetic struggle, he reposed in peace.

Hieromartyr Cyprian and Virgin-Martyr Justina (304).

"Saint Justina, who was from Damascus, lived in virginity for the sake of Christ. Saint Cyprian, who was from Antioch, began as an initiate of magic and worshipper of the demons. A certain foolish young man who had been smitten with Justina's beauty hired Cyprian to draw her to love him; when Cyprian had used every demonic device he knew, and had failed, being repulsed by the power of Christ Whom Justina invoked, he understood the weakness of the demons and came to know the truth. Delivered from demonic delusion, he came to Christ and burned all his books of magic, was baptized, and later ascended the episcopal throne in his country. Later, he and Justina were arrested by the Count of Damascus, and, having endured many torments at his hands, they were sent finally to Diocletian in Nicomedia, where they were beheaded in the year 304." (*Great Horologion*)

St Cassian the Greek, Wonderworker of Uglich (1504)

In 1473, Princess Sophia Paleologos came to Russia with a large retinue to marry Prince Ivan III. One of this retinue was a certain nobleman named Constantine, a relative of the last Byzantine Emperor, Constantine XI Paleologos. Constantine entered into the service of Archbishop of Rostov, and in 1489 went with him on his retirement to the Monastery of St Therapont at White Lake. Constantine himself had no plans to become a monk; but on his first night at the monastery St Martinian (January 12) appeared to him, exhorting him to renounce the world immediately. Constantine reported his vision to the Archbishop, who confirmed its authenticity, and Constantine was tonsured a monk with the name Cassian.

The new monk entered into the ascetic struggle with fervor: though he had spent his life as a prince, he gladly undertook the lowliest tasks and the most onerous obedience. At the encouragement of his friend St Nilus of Sora (Nil Sorsky, May 7), he took up a hermit's life by the River Uchma in the Uglich district. In time various disciples gathered around him, and St Cassian, against his own will, became the head of a *skete*. His teachings to his disciples always emphasized obedience, care for the poor, and prayer for the departed. He reposed in peace.

OCTOBER 3

Hieromartyr Dionysius the Areopagite (96)

He is mentioned in Acts 17:19-34. He was a learned Athenian, a member of the Athenian court on Mars Hill (*Areos Pagos* in Greek, from which the title 'Areopagite' comes). At the time of Christ's crucifixion, he was studying in Egypt and saw the sky darkened there for three hours when Christ breathed His last. He later married and had several children. When St Paul preached in Athens, Dionysius was among the first to believe, and became either the first (according to some) Bishop of Athens, or the second, succeeding St Hierotheos (commemorated tomorrow, October 4). With St Hierotheos he was present at the Dormition of the Mother of God. He received a martyr's end in his old age, possibly in Athens. He is the author of several famous works of mystical theology, including *On the Divine Names*.

Holy Hieromartyr Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, and his disciples (258)

He was a disciple of Origen and became a priest in Alexandria. He became Bishop of Alexandria in 247, serving not only his own see but the whole Church with fervor and compassion. He traveled to Rome to fight the Novatian schisms that disturbed the Body of Christ at that time, and mediated in the dispute between St Cyprian (September 16) and the Pope.

During the reign of Valerian, the new Governor of Alexandria, Emilianus, summoned St Dionysius, along with a group of his clergy, and demanded that they renounce Christ. When all stood firm in the Faith, he exiled them to the remote village of Kephro. But Christians flocked to the village to seek out the holy Bishop, and many pagans in the region were converted by

him — so that soon the town was more nearly a Christian mission than a place of exile. When Emilianus learned of this, he exiled the Bishop and his disciples far into the wilderness, where they lived amidst terrible sufferings and hardships for more than twelve years. Saint Dionysius and his deacons Gaius and Faustus all died there; Eusebius the deacon and Maximus the priest eventually escaped. Eusebius became Bishop of Laodicea; Maximus, like his spiritual father, became Bishop of Alexandria.

St John the Chozebite, Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine (532)

He came from a prominent family in Egypt, and was brought up among the Monophysites. He became a monk in his youth and went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. When he attempted to enter the Church of the Resurrection to venerate the Precious Cross, an unseen power prevented him from entering. The next night he heard a voice telling him in his sleep that those who do not embrace the Orthodox faith are unworthy to worship the holy Cross of the Savior. John awoke and hurried to the church where, in tears, he accepted and confessed the entire Orthodox Faith. After returning to Egypt he settled in Palestine living alone in a cave in the isolated region called Chozeba. There he lived in solitude until one day a couple brought their son, possessed by an evil spirit. They had been sent to John by Ananias, a well-known ascetic of Palestine. John considered himself unworthy to pray for the casting out of demons, so he prayed in the name of Ananias, and the boy was healed. Thenceforth, John's wonderworking powers became known, and many made the difficult journey to his cave for the healing of spiritual and bodily ailments. Later John, much against his will, was consecrated Bishop of Caesarea; but he was unable to tolerate the cares of episcopal life and fled again to the desert, where he spent the rest of his life. The faithful continued to visit him in great numbers, and many signs and wonders were worked through his prayers. He reposed in peace at a great age.

O C T O B E R 4

Hieromartyr Hierotheos, Bishop of Athens (1st c.)

He was probably the first Bishop of Athens, ordained by the Holy Apostle Paul himself. St Dionysius (see October 3) describes St Hierotheos as his teacher and friend "after Paul." With St Dionysius, St Hierotheos was miraculously brought by the power of the Holy Spirit to be present with the Apostles at the Dormition of the Theotokos. He reposed in peace.

Our Holy Father Ammon of Egypt (4th c)

"Our holy Father Ammon's parents died in his childhood. He was brought up by an uncle, who made him marry when he was still very young. On the night of his wedding, as soon as he and his wife retired to the bridal chamber, Ammon took up the holy Scriptures and read the passage in the Epistle to the Corinthians where the Apostle speaks of the disadvantages of marriage because of all the troubles and cares that come with it, while virgins consecrated to the Lord can devote themselves without distraction to prayer and to spiritual labour. Both spouses took the following words literally: *From now on, let those who have wives be as though they had none... and those who deal with the world, as though they had no dealings with it* (1 Cor. 7:29,31). They decided to remain in their virginity and to retire together to a desert place where they could give themselves over to prayer and fasting. They set out for the mountain of Nitria, some way from Alexandria, and settled in a little hut there. But, living together as man and woman, they soon realized the inexpediency of tempting nature head-on and of provoking the attacks of demons. They parted company, therefore, each to live separately in asceticism. Ammon never used wine or oil but lived only on dry bread that he ate every two or three days.

"His manner of life was pleasing to the Lord, and a great many brethren who wanted to embrace the monastic life soon came to join him. When a new aspirant arrived, Ammon would immediately let him have his own cell with everything in it, and the other brethren would secretly bring provisions to the newcomer or whatever else might be useful. This showed that fraternal love was first among the laws observed in this ever-growing brotherhood. In a few years, under the direction of Ammon, the desert of Nitria was transformed into a veritable city. Some of the brethren now wanted to build their cells at a distance where they could live in greater solitude, so when one day Saint Antony the Great came to visit him, Abba Ammon asked his advice about the place to choose. At the ninth hour, after taking a scanty meal together, they walked in the desert until sunset, when they set up a cross at the place they had reached, so that those who wanted to could build their cells there with the blessing of the two Elders. 'In this way', Abba Antony said, 'the brethren coming from Nitria, after a meal at the ninth hour, to see those who are here, will meet them at this moment. And if those who leave here to go to Nitria do the same, they will not lose their *hesychia* (stillness).' This was how the desert of *Kellis* ('the Cells') came to be established almost twelve miles from Nitria. More than six hundred monks were soon living there, each in his own cell.

"Saint Ammon and Saint Antony were united in a deep spiritual friendship. When Abba Ammon gave up his soul in peace to the Lord at Nitria, Antony, far away on his mountain, broke off the conversation he was having with some monks and, in ecstasy, saw the soul of Ammon going up to Heaven accompanied by the joyful hymns of a multitude of angels. Among other words inspired by the Holy Spirit, Saint Ammon said, 'Bear with everyone as God bears with

you." (*Synaxarion*)

OCTOBER 5

Holy Martyr Charitina of Amissoes (304)

She was the handmaid (according to the *Great Horologion*) or adopted daughter (according to the *Prologue*) of an eminent Roman citizen named Claudius, during the reign of Diocletian. She was betrayed as a Christian to the governor Dometian, before whom she fearlessly confessed her faith. After she had endured many cruel tortures, the governor sent some dissolute youths to rape her. Having prayed to be spared this dishonor, she was permitted to give up her soul to God.

† Holy Hierarchs of Moscow Peter (1326), Alexis (1378), Jonas (1461), Macarius (1563), Philip (1569), Hermogenes (1612), Philaret (1867), Innocent (1879), and Tikhon (1925)

This Feast of the Hierarchs of Moscow was established during the reign of Tsar Theodore and Patriarch Job in the year 1596. All of them are commemorated individually as well as on this day. Only Sts Peter, Alexis, Jonas and Philip are specifically mentioned in the Menaion service, but other holy hierarchs of Moscow have been added to the commemoration over the years.

Our Holy Mother Methodia of Kimolos (1865)

She was born in 1865 on the island of Kimolos. Against her own wishes, her parents married her to a sailor, but he drowned soon after their wedding. Though she grieved for him, she also took his loss as a sign that she was to follow the path that she had always most deeply desired — so she entered monastic life, receiving the name Methodia. She then shut herself in a small cell where she gave herself to prayer without reservation, hardly ever leaving. She prayed virtually around the clock, and kept strict fast every day but Saturday and Sunday, on which days she would leave her cell to partake of the Mysteries. She received no visitors at all during Lent; at other times, she would receive only women. She became known throughout her region as a counselor and healer. She reposed in peace at the age of forty-two, in 1908.

OCTOBER 6

† Holy Apostle Thomas

One of the Twelve Apostles, he was a Galilean by birth. His name means "twin." The twentieth chapter of St John's Gospel describes how, when he doubted the appearance of the Risen Lord, Christ appeared to him again, saying "Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing," at which Thomas cried out "My Lord and my God. Through this one event the Holy Scriptures attest that Christ is risen bodily, not merely as a spirit, as some heresies claim; and that He is in fact God. After Pentecost, St Thomas proclaimed the Gospel in the East, and established the Christian faith as far as India, where the small remnant of the ancient Church still traces its foundation to him. According to some accounts he met a martyr's end; according to others, he reposed in peace. St John Chrysostom mentions that his tomb was in Edessa in Syria; his relics may have been translated there from India in the fourth century.

OCTOBER 7

Holy Martyrs Sergius and Bacchus (296/303)

"These holy and wonderful martyrs and heroes of the Christian faith were at first nobles at the court of the Emperor Maximian. The Emperor himself valued them greatly for their courage, wisdom and zeal, but, when he heard that the great nobles of his were Christians, his love for them turned to fury. And once, when there was a great offering of sacrifices to idols, the Emperor summoned Sergius and Bacchus to offer sacrifice together with him, and they openly refused to obey him in this. Beside himself with anger, the Emperor ordered that their robes, rings and marks of eminence be stripped from them and they be dressed in women's clothing. He then put iron yokes on their necks and led them thus through the streets of Rome, to be mocked by each and all. The Emperor then sent them to Asia, to Antiochus the governor, for torture. Antiochus had achieved his distinguished rank with the help of Sergius and Bacchus, who had at one time recommended him to the Emperor. When Antiochus began to urge them to deny Christ and save themselves from dishonourable suffering and death, the two saints replied: 'Both honour and dishonour, both life and death — all are one to him who seeks the heavenly Kingdom.' Antiochus threw Sergius into prison and ordered that Bacchus be tortured first. The servants took turns beating holy Bacchus until his whole body was broken into fragments. His holy spirit went forth from his broken and bloodstained body and was borne to the Lord by angels. St Bacchus suffered in the town of Varvallis. Then holy Sergius was led out. Iron shoes studded with nails were put on his feet, and he was driven out into the Syrian town of Resapha, and there beheaded with the sword. His soul went to Paradise where, together with his friend Bacchus, he received the wreath of immortal glory from Christ his King and Lord. These two glorious knights suffered for the Christian faith in about 303." (*Prologue*) The *Great Horologion* gives 296 as the date of their repose. One of the most beautiful churches in

Constantinople, still standing, is dedicated to Sts Sergius and Bacchus.

Holy Hieromartyr Polychronius (4th c.)

The son of peasants, he was known from his childhood for his piety and asceticism. Once, by his prayers, a spring of water sprang up near his village, where it was needed for the town's survival. When he came of age, Polychronius went to work in some vineyards near Constantinople. Even though he labored all day, he would eat only every two or three days. The master of the vineyard, seeing his strict and prayerful way of life, gave him a large sum of money and said 'Man of God, go home and pray for me.' With the money, Polychronius built a church, settled near it, and a few years later was ordained to be a priest in the church he had built. Polychronius appeared at the First Ecumenical Council in 325 as a fervent defender of Orthodoxy. Because of this, some Arian heretics determined to take revenge. One day, after the death of the Emperor Constantine, the Arians attacked Polychronius at the altar as he was celebrating the Divine Liturgy, thus mingling his blood with the very blood of the Savior.

The Ninety-nine Fathers of Crete (date unknown)

Saint John the Hermit and thirty-five companions lived in Egypt, but took ship as a group for Cyprus in order to practice asceticism in exile. At Cyprus they met a party of thirty-nine others who also sought to live the ascetic life more fully, and the two groups joined. "In order that these ascetics, too, might taste of the graces of voluntary exile" (*Synaxarion*), they travelled to Attalia in Pamphylia. There, twenty-four more monks joined them, so that their company now numbered ninety-nine. (This number was ordained by God, so that Christ Himself, their Head, would complete their number at one hundred.) After some time they took ship again for Crete, where they lived in two caves in a remote, deserted area, living only on the plants that grew wild there.

Saint John sought his brothers' blessing to live as a hermit. On the day of his departure they prayed that they all might repose on the day of John's death, and enter together into the Kingdom of God. John's asceticism was so severe that after awhile he could no longer walk, but crawled from his cave to gather the small quantities of food he allowed himself. A shepherd, seeing him from a distance, thought that he was some animal, and shot him with an arrow. Finding the dying John, the shepherd was stricken with horror and grief, and threw himself at the hermit's feet, begging forgiveness. The saint only lived long enough to give the young man his pardon and blessing before surrendering his soul to God. The prayer of his ninety-eight brethren was mysteriously granted: between the third and seventh hour of that day, they all, one after another, fell asleep in peace.

OCTOBER 8

Our Holy Mother Pelagia (461)

"This Saint was a prominent actress of the city of Antioch, and a pagan, who lived a life of unrestrained prodigality and led many to perdition. Instructed and baptized by a certain bishop named Nonnus (November 10), she departed to the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem, where she lived as a recluse, feigning to be a eunuch called Pelagius. She lived in such holiness and repentance that within three or four years she was deemed worthy to repose in an odour of sanctity, in the middle of the fifth century. Her tomb on the Mount of Olives has been a place of pilgrimage ever since." (*Great Horologion*). The *Prologue* adds that Pelagia had accumulated a large fortune as a courtesan, all of which she gave away to the poor upon her conversion.

Sa thaïs the Repentant Harlot (4th c.)

She lived in Alexandria, where, when she was seventeen, her own mother placed her in a brothel, where due to her great beauty she was able to amass some wealth. Saint Serapion (March 21), hearing about Thaïs and her way of life, was moved by God to try to convert her. He dressed himself as a soldier, found her, gave her a gold piece, and went with her to her room. When the door was shut, he put aside his tunic, revealing his monastic robe, and asked if he might speak with her. With tears he told her of the doom that awaits sinners, and of the infinite mercy of God, who desires that all should be saved and welcomes every repentant sinner. Thaïs, her heart melted by his words, ran to the public square, burned all the fine clothes and possessions that she had acquired through her trade, and went with Serapion to a women's monastery. There he instructed her to stay secluded in her cell, beseeching God's mercy constantly and only eating every other day; she was to do this until she was instructed otherwise. Thaïs lived in this way for three years, with such zeal that she amazed all her monastic sisters. Meanwhile St Serapion went to St Anthony the Great to ask him if God had accepted Thaïs' repentance. Saint Anthony and his brethren spent a night in prayer and received a vision in which they were assured that Thaïs had been found worthy of God's mercy. Returning to the monastery, Serapion made the repentant Saint leave her cell, though by now she only wished to spend her life in repentant prayer. After spending only fifteen days in the common life of the monastery, the holy Thaïs reposed in peace.

OCTOBER 9

† Holy Apostle James, Son of Alphaeus.

He was one of the Twelve Apostles, the brother of the Apostle and Evangelist St Matthew. After Pentecost he preached the Gospel in many nations, and was finally martyred in Egypt, crucified by pagans.

Saints Andronicus and Athanasia (5th c.)

Andronicus was a goldsmith who lived in Antioch during the reign of Theodosius the Great (379-395). He and his wife Athanasia were devout Christians who strove to follow Christ in all things. They gave a third of all that they earned to the poor, another third to the Church, and lived on the remainder. After they had two children, they agreed to live henceforth as brother and sister. Both their children died on the same day, and they grieved inconsolably until St Justin the Martyr appeared to Athanasia at the children's grave and told her that her children were in the Kingdom of God, happier than they had ever been on earth. Andronicus and Athanasia then travelled to Egypt, where each took up the monastic life in different monasteries. After living for many years in asceticism, they reposed in peace within ten days of one another.

Holy and Righteous Abraham and Lot

Read their story in the book of Genesis. They are also commemorated on the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, Dec 11-17.

St Stephen the Blind, Prince of Serbia (1476)

He was born in 1417. Stephen and his younger brother Gregory were taken captive by the Turks and blinded on the day of Pascha 1441; several years later they were ransomed back to their father. After his father's death, Stephen, though blind, ruled Serbia for a short time, but was deposed in a *coup* and exiled to Albania. There he met St Angelina, whom he married in 1461. Their marriage was blessed with three children. Once again Stephen was threatened by the Turks and fled with his family to Trieste in Italy. There he held firmly to the Orthodox faith despite strong pressures to convert to Roman Catholicism. The holy prince, having patiently endured the many hardships of his life, reposed in peace in 1476. Yet after his death, a heavenly light miraculously appeared over his tomb. When the tomb was opened, his relics were found to be incorrupt; the sick were healed by touching them, and the blind received their sight. The relics were placed in the Monastery of Krushedol, founded by his widow St Angelina. The Monastery was sacked in 1716 by the Turks, who burned the church and cut the holy relics to pieces. Some fragments still remain at the reconstructed monastery.

Holy Hieromartyr Denis (Dionysius), first Bishop of Paris (ca. 258)

Saint Denis (a westernization of the the Greek *Dionysius*, was one of seven bishops sent to Gaul by the Bishop of Rome during the reign of the Emperor Decius. Their mission was to extend the spread of the Gospel in that mostly-pagan land. While most of the bishops were sent to major settlements, St Denis was assigned to the small, remote pagan town of Lutetia — which later grew to become the city of Paris. He and his companions settled outside the town in a house given to him by a convert, where the few Christians could meet in secret. Soon, through the holy bishop's grace-filled preaching and his many miracles, Christianity grew rapidly.

Soon a fierce persecution of Christians swept through Gaul, and many of the faithful were abused, tortured or put to death. Saint Denis, fearless of danger and heedless of his own old age, travelled among the Christians, visiting the prisoners and exhorting all to remain firm in their confession of Christ. Soon he himself was arrested along with several companions, and was tortured without pity. When was publicly hung on a cross, he preached to the onlookers of the mystery of Christ's Passion. Taken back to prison, he celebrated the holy Eucharist for the last time, enveloped in a heavenly light. He and a host of other Martyrs were then beheaded on a hill, now called Montmartre in their memory. There is a tradition that at the beheading he rose up, took his own head in his hands, and walked for several miles to a place that later became the Basilica of St Denis in the town named after him. Before the French Revolution, the Kings and Queens of France were buried in this church.

OCTOBER 10

Holy Martyrs Eulampius and Eulampia (196)

They were brother and sister, from Nicomedia, who suffered for Christ during the reign of Maximian. Eulampius was arrested for his Christian faith; when his sister received the news, she hurried to join him. Both were subjected to various cruel tortures, including being cast into fire and boiling pitch, from which they miraculously emerged unharmed. Finally, Eulampius was beheaded, and Eulampia gave up her spirit before she too could be beheaded.

Blessed Fool for Christ Andrew of Totma (1637)

"Saint Andrew came of a family of devout, unlettered peasants. He obtained an education by going to church and, on the death of his parents, became a novice at the Monastery of Galich, in the diocese of Kostroma. The Abbot, who was remarkable for his wisdom, discerned Andrew's spiritual gifts and encouraged him to undertake the unusual and difficult asceticism of Foolishness-for-Christ. Andrew left the monastery to lead a wayfaring life, but often returned to reveal his

thoughts and deeds to his *starets*. On his Elder's death, he settled near the Church of the Resurrection in the town of Totna, where he was completely unknown. He spent the whole night in prayer and during the day begged alms that he forthwith gave to the poor. He went barefoot summer and winter and lived on nothing but bread and water. Every year he made a pilgrimage to the holy places of the region. One day he was accosted by the chief of an outlandish tribe. The man was suffering from an eye complaint and asked Andrew, who was already looked upon as a wonderworker, to cure him. Andrew fled, but the wild man washed his eyes in the snow trodden by the Saint and was healed.

"Worn out by asceticism and privation, Saint Andrew foreknew the day of his decease. He called a priest, confessed and communicated in the holy Mysteries, and not long after he fell asleep in the Lord, a heavenly scent pervading the room where his body lay. Some time later, the Saint appeared to a sick woman as she slept, holding the Gospel for her to venerate and telling her to pray at his tomb. When she awoke, the woman was healed." (*Synaxarion*)

OCTOBER 11

Holy Apostle Philip, One of the Seven Deacons

He was married and had four daughters, virgins consecrated to Christ, each of whom was granted the gift of prophecy (Acts 21). When the Apostles first appointed deacons, Philip was chosen along with St Stephen and five others (Acts 6). He not only served the poor and widows, but was a powerful preacher of the Gospel: Simon the Magician was baptised after seeing his miracles, and it was St Philip who baptised the eunuch of Queen Candace of Ethiopia. In later life he was made a bishop, and reposed in peace.

† Synaxis of the Holy *Staritsi* of Optina Monastery

Commemorated today are our holy fathers Moses, Antony, Leonid (Lev), Macarius, Hilarion, Ambrose, Anatolius I, Isaac I, Joseph, Barsanuphius, Anatolius the Younger, Nectarius, Nikon the Confessor, and Hieromartyr Isaac the Younger. Hieromartyr Isaac was shot by the Bolsheviks on December 26 1937.

This feast commemorates a few of the holy Fathers who made the Optina Hermitage (*Pustyn*) a focus for the powerful renewal movement that spread through the Church in Russia beginning early in the nineteenth century, and continuing up to (and even into) the atheist persecutions of the twentieth century. Saint Paisius Velichkovsky (November 15) was powerfully influential in bringing the almost-lost hesychastic tradition of Orthodox spirituality to Russia in the eighteenth century, and his labors found in Optina Monastery a 'headquarters' from which they spread throughout the Russian land. The monastery itself had been in existence since at least the sixteenth century, but had fallen into decay through the anti-monastic policies of Catherine II and other modernizing rulers. Around 1790, Metropolitan Platon of Moscow undertook a mission to restore and revive the monastery in the tradition set forth by St Paisius. By the early 1800s the monastery (located about 80 miles from Moscow) had become a beacon of Orthodox spirituality, partly through their publication of Orthodox spiritual texts, but more importantly through the lineage of divinely-enlightened spiritual fathers (*staritsi*, plural of *starets*) who served as guides to those, noble and peasant, who flocked to the monastery for their holy counsel. The fathers aroused some controversy in their own day; a few critics (some of them from other monasteries) disapproved of their allowing the Jesus Prayer to become widely-known among the people, fearing that it would give rise to spiritual delusion (*prelest*). For a wonderful depiction of the deep influence of the Jesus Prayer on Russian life during this period, read the anonymously-written *Way of a Pilgrim*.

With the coming of the Russian Revolution in 1917, the monastery was of course officially shut down, but some of the Fathers were able to keep it running for a time as an 'agricultural legion'. Over the years, most of the Fathers were dispersed, to die in exile, in prison camps, or by the firing squad. Many of them are known to have continued to function as *staritsi* to their spiritual children, despite great danger and hardship, for the remainder of their time on earth.

Commemoration of the Optina *staritsi* was approved by the Synod of the Russian Church Abroad in 1990, and by the Moscow Patriarchate in 1996. The Optina Monastery itself was officially re-established in 1987.

Saint Theophanes the Hymnographer (the Branded) (847)

He was born in Arabia to wealthy Christian parents. He and his brother Theodore (December 27) became monks in the monastery of St Sabbas the Sanctified. During the iconoclast persecutions, they were sent by Patriarch Thomas of Jerusalem to the Emperor Leo the Armenian, to defend the veneration of icons. The Emperor had the two brothers tortured and imprisoned; then, as a final insult, he had a condemnation branded (or, by another account, tattooed) on their faces in twelve lines of iambic verse. When the iconoclast persecution ended, Theophanes was freed and was soon made a bishop. In all, he suffered for the holy icons for twenty-five years. Both he and his brother Theodore composed many Canons and hymns, which are still used in the Church's services. He reposed in peace.

Our Holy Father Philotheos Kokkinos, Patriarch of Constantinople (1379)

He was born in Thessalonika around 1300; his mother was a convert from Judaism. He entered monastic life, first at Mt

Sinai, then at the Great Lavra on Mt Athos. The so-called "Hesychast controversy" was then raging. And St Philotheos became one of the firmest and most effective supporters of St Gregory Palamas (November 14) in his defense of Orthodoxy against western-inspired attacks on the doctrines of uncreated Grace and the possibility of true union with God. It was St Philotheos who drafted the *Hagiorite Tome*, the manifesto of the monks of Mt Athos setting forth how the Saints partake of the Divine and uncreated Light which the Apostles beheld at Christ's Transfiguration. In 1351, he took part in the "Hesychas Council" in Constantinople, and wrote its Acts. In 1354 he was made Patriarch of Constantinople; he stepped down after one year, but was recalled to the Patriarchal throne in 1364. He continued to be a zealous champion of undiluted Orthodoxy, writing treatises setting forth the theology of the Uncreated Energies of God and refuting the scholastic philosophy that was then infecting the Western church. Despite (or because of?) his uncompromising Orthodoxy, he always sought a true, rather than political, reconciliation with the West, and even worked to convene an Ecumenical Council to resolve the differences between the churches. This holy Patriarch was deposed in 1376 when the Emperor Andronicus IV came to the throne; he died in exile in 1379.

St Philotheos composed the Church's services to St Gregory Palamas. He is not listed in the *Synaxaria*, but is venerated as a Saint in the Greek church.

SUNDAY ON OR AFTER OCTOBER 11

† Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council

The Seventh Ecumenical Council, convoked by the Empress Irene and met at Nicaea from September 24 to October 13, 787. Patriarch Tarasios (commemorated February 25) presided. The council ended almost fifty years of iconoclast persecution and established the veneration of the holy icons as basic to the belief and spirituality of Christ's Church. As the *Synaxarion* says, "It was not simply the veneration of the holy images that the Fathers defended in these terms but, in fact, the reality of the Incarnation of the Son of God."

"The second Council of Nicaea is the seventh and last Ecumenical Council recognized by the Orthodox Church. This does not mean that there may not be ecumenical Councils in the future although, in holding the seventh place, the Council of Nicaea has taken to itself the symbol of perfection and completion represented by this number in Holy Scripture (e.g. Gen. 2:1-3). It closes the era of the great dogmatic disputes which enabled the Church to describe, in definitions excluding all ambiguity, the bounds of the holy Orthodox Faith. From that time, every heresy that appears can be related to one or other of the errors that the Church, assembled in universal Councils, has anathematized from the first until the seventh Council of Nicaea." *Synaxarion*

OCTOBER 12

St Symeon the New Theologian (1022)

As a young man he became a monk in the Studite Monastery in Constantinople; later he became abbot of the Monastery of St Mamas, also in Constantinople. After a life of great asceticism, including many trials, criticisms and afflictions, he reposed in peace. (He reposed on March 12, but since this day always falls during the Great Fast, his feast is kept today.) His teaching on the soul's ability to enter directly into communion with God in this life aroused some opposition in his own time, and the title 'New Theologian' was not always applied in a positive sense. His experiential, mystical teachings are firmly rooted in his doctrine of the Church: his writings contain many powerful affirmations of the centrality of participation in the *Mysteries* in our struggle for salvation. He is the author of many sublimely beautiful sermons, writings and hymns, a number of them in metered verse. With St John the Evangelist and St Gregory, Patriarch of Constantinople, he is one of only three whom the Church has officially called "Theologian."

Holy Martyrs Probus, Tarachus and Andronicus (304)

All three suffered during the reign of Diocletian. Though born in three different places, the three were found to be Christians at Pompeiopolis in Cilicia, arrested together, and brought before the Governor, Numerian Maximus. Tarachus was sixty-five years old at the time of his arrest, but his captors showed no respect for his age, tormenting him as cruelly as the others. All three immediately and boldly confessed their faith, and were put to many vicious tortures, during which Probus said to Maximus, 'This bloodshed is oil and perfume for me to anoint myself with joy for further contests.' At one point the persecutors forcibly stuffed Andronicus' mouth with meat and wine that had been offered to idols, thinking that in doing so they were winning a victory. Andronicus only mocked them, explaining that only wilful apostasy brings defeat to a Christian.

Finally, Maximus ordered them taken to the theater and thrown to wild beasts for the entertainment of the people. Though the beasts had just torn others to pieces, they would not touch the holy martyrs, but played and fawned around them: A ferocious bear licked their wounds, and a lioness played affectionately around Tarachus. Seeing this, many in the

crowd believed in Christ and denounced the Governor. The furious Maximus ordered his soldiers to enter the arena and cut the three to pieces. Three Christians who had witnessed the spectacle came by night to retrieve their bodies, but were unable to distinguish the martyrs' relics amid the general carnage. When they prayed for divine aid, three lights appeared above the bodies of the three holy ones, and they were given honorable burial in a mountain cave.

OCTOBER 13

Holy Martyrs Carpus and Papyrus, with Agathodorus and Agathonica (251)

Saint Carpus was Bishop of Thyatira, and Papyrus was his deacon. In the reign of the Emperor Decius, both were arrested as Christians and put to torture. Agathodorus their servant and Agathonica, Papyrus' sister, willingly followed after them and voluntarily confessed Christ also. After many sufferings, all four were beheaded.

Holy Martyr Zlata (Chryse) (1796)

"Born in the village of Slatina in the Meglin region [of Bulgaria], of poor peasants who had three other daughters, St Zlata was a meek and devout girl, wise with Christ's wisdom and golden ('zlata' means 'gold') not only in name but also in her God-fearing heart. When Zlata went out one day to get water, some shameless Turks seized her and carried her off to their house. When one of them urged her to embrace Islam and become his wife, Zlata answered fearlessly: 'I believe in Christ, and know Him alone as my bridegroom; I shall never deny Him even if you put me to a thousand tortures and cut me into pieces.' Her parents and sisters then arrived, and said to her: 'O our daughter, have mercy on yourself and us. Deny Christ publicly, that we can all be happy. Christ is merciful; He will forgive your sin, committed under the pressure of life.' Her poor parents and kinsfolk wept bitterly. But Zlata's heroic soul would not be overcome by devilish seduction. She replied to her parents: 'When you urge me to deny Christ, the true God, you are no longer parents or sisters to me; I have the Lord Jesus Christ as father, the Mother of God as mother and, for brothers and sisters, the saints.' Then the Turks threw her into prison, where she lay for three months, and they took her out every day and flogged her until her blood flowed onto the ground. Finally, they hanged her upside-down and made a fire to choke her to death with the smoke. But God was with Zlata, and gave her strength in her suffering. At the very end, they hanged her from a tree and cut her into small pieces. Thus this martyr-maiden gave her soul into God's hands, and entered into the realm of Paradise, in 1796. Pieces of her relics were taken by Christians to their homes, that they might bring a blessing to them." (*Prologue*)

OCTOBER 14

Holy Martyrs Nazarius, Gervasius, Protasius, and Celsus of Milan (1st c.)

These martyrs contested for the faith in Milan, and were beheaded under the Emperor Nero. Many years later, their relics were discovered by St Ambrose through a vision, and were given honorable burial.

Saint Cosmas the Hymnographer (8th c.)

He was from Jerusalem. An orphan, he was adopted into the family of St John of Damascus (commemorated December 4). He became Bishop of Maiuma, a city on the coast of Palestine, which was later named Constantia. Like his adoptive brother he became a noted hymnographer: The Canon of the Cross (Sept. 14) and the Canon for Christ's Nativity, "Christ is born, give ye glory..." are his compositions.

Saint Nicholas the Pious (Sviatosha), Prince of Chernigov (1143)

He was the first Russian prince to forsake the world and enter monastic life, at the Lavra of the Kiev Caves. Though his brothers according to the flesh tried to turn him back from his chosen path, he embraced monastic life zealously, amazing his fellow-monks by his humility and piety. Despite his rank, he insisted upon being treated like the simplest novice, performing the meanest tasks joyfully. In time his abbot allowed him to withdraw from the common life, living entirely in his cell in constant prayer. He reposed in peace in 1143. A few months later his brother Prince Iziaslav was healed of a grave illness when he put on St Nicholas' hair shirt and drank some water from the monastery. The Prince asked to be clothed in the hairshirt on the day of his death.

OCTOBER 15

Holy Hieromartyr Lucian, Presbyter of the Church of Antioch (312)

He was born in Samosata in Syria (and is sometimes referred to as "Lucian of Samosata") of noble parents. In his youth he received an excellent education. Though a privileged life was open to him, he gave all his goods away to the poor and embraced a life of asceticism, supporting himself writing and tutoring. He produced an edition of the Old Testament, freeing it from various corruptions introduced by heretics. He was made a priest in Antioch, where he served the Church faithfully. During the persecutions of Maximian, he was arrested while visiting Nicomedia to strengthen the faithful there. He was cast into prison for his faith and allowed to perish of hunger and thirst. Saint John Chrysostom wrote of him: "He scorned

hunger; let us also scorn luxury and destroy the lordship of the stomach; that we may, when the time comes for us to meet such torture, be prepared beforehand, by the help of a lesser ascesis, to show ourselves worthy of glory in the hour of battle.

OCTOBER 16

Holy Martyr Longinus the Centurion (1st c.)

This is the Centurion who stood at the Cross of Christ and, seeing Him breathe his last, cried out "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54). From that day forth he was a believer, and was soon baptized. According to some accounts, he was one of the guard at the Tomb of Christ, and was one of those whom the Judaeans sought to bribe not to tell the news of the Resurrection. But Longinus would not be bribed, so the leaders plotted to kill him. He left the army and went to his homeland of Cappadocia, where he boldly preached Christ. He was beheaded at the instigation of Pontius Pilate.

Saint James (Jakov) Netsetov, Missionary to Alaska (1865)

He was born on the island of Unalaska in 1802, to a Russian father and an Aleut mother. Traveling to Russia, he attended the seminary in Irkutsk, and returned to Alaska after being ordained to the priesthood. For the next thirty-six years he served as missionary and pastor to the Alaskan people, undergoing tremendous hardships to do so. He first traveled among the peoples of the Aleutian islands, using native kayaks to paddle between the islands. From 1845 to 1863 he worked among the native people of the Yukon valley, traveling from village to village by dog-sled. He was the first Orthodox priest to serve the area since the hieromartyr Juvenaly, companion of St Herman. He carried with him a tent which served as a traveling church, in which he served the Divine Liturgy wherever he went — though sometimes the services could not be held because the bread and wine had frozen. Toward the end of his life, worn out by his labors, he settled for a brief time in Sitka, where he reposed in peace in 1865.

Our Venerable Father Gall, Enlightener of Switzerland (640)

He was born in Ireland to wealthy parents, who sent him to be educated at the Monastery of Bangor. There he embraced the ascetical life and became a monk. He was one of the twelve monks who traveled with his spiritual father St Columbanus (November 23) as missionaries to Gaul. In time some of the group traveled into pagan lands, up the Rhine river to Lake Zurich. The monks settled on Lake Constance around a chapel dedicated to St Aurelia, which had been taken by the pagans as a shrine; they cleansed and reconsecrated the chapel, which became the center of their new monastery. Saint Gall lived as a hermit, serving the brethren by making nets and catching fish. In 612 St Columbanus went on to Italy with most of his disciples, leaving St Gall and a few others to continue their life. When St Gall delivered Frideburga, the daughter of a local duke, from a demon, he offered the saint a tract of land on the shores of Lake Constance; here was founded the monastery that in later times bore St Gall's name.

At various times, the holy Gall refused calls to become a bishop, or to take over the abbacy of the great monastery at Luxeuil. To all such requests he answered that he would rather serve than command. He continued living in his isolated monastic community until he reposed in peace in 640, at the age of ninety-nine. In later years, and continuing well into the middle ages, the Monastery of St Gall became famed for the holiness of its monks and for its library.

OCTOBER 17

Holy Prophet Hosea (820 BC)

His name means "God is Help." He is the first and earliest of the twelve Minor Prophets. At the Lord's command he married a harlot, who was repeatedly unfaithful to him despite his love and faithfulness toward her. In his prophetic writings he shows this marriage as an image of God's faithful care for His unfaithful people.

Holy Martyrs Cosmas and Damian, the Unmercenarys of Cilicia (4th c.)

The Church commemorates three pairs of brothers named Cosmas and Damian, all counted among the Unmercenary Physicians. The first reposed in peace and are commemorated on November 1; the second were stoned to death in Rome, and are commemorated on July 1; the third pair, commemorated today, were Arab doctors. They embraced the Christian faith together and thereafter cared for the sick in the name of the Lord Jesus, performing many miraculous healings. They were handed over to the governor Lysias by jealous pagans. When the governor accused them of healing by sorcery, they replied 'We have no sort of magic, nor use any, but we have the power of Christ to save us and all who call upon His holy Name.' The governor first attempted to bribe them to deny Christ then, when this was useless, subjected them to many tortures. Finally they were beheaded. Their holy relics continued to perform many miracles of healing.

OCTOBER 18

† Holy Apostle and Evangelist St Luke

He was a physician from Antioch, a disciple and traveling-companion of the Apostle Paul, who refers to him as the 'beloved

physician.' He wrote not only his Gospel but the Acts of the Apostles, dedicating both to Theophilus, who according to one tradition was the Governor of Achaia, a convert. Much of the Acts of the Apostles is written in the first person, describing his own travels with the St Paul. He lived to an old age and died in Achaia, possibly in Patras. Most ancient authors say that he died as a Martyr.

Church traditions about St Luke are somewhat contradictory. According to many, he was one of the Seventy and thus an eye-witness to Christ's ministry on earth. (He is usually considered to be the companion of St Cleopas on the Road to Emmaus). According to others, he never met Christ himself but was converted by the preaching of the Apostle Paul. Church tradition holds that St Luke was the first iconographer, and painted an image of the Most Holy Theotokos from life. He is considered the patron of iconographers. Several icons attributed to St Luke himself are still in existence.

OCTOBER 19

† Righteous John, Wonderworker of Kronstadt (1908).

"Saint John of Kronstadt was a married priest, who lived with his wife in virginity. Through his untiring labours in his priestly duties and love for the poor and sinners, he was granted by our Lord great gifts of clairvoyance and miracle-working, to such a degree that in the last years of his life miracles of healings — both of body and of soul — were performed countless times each day through his prayers, often for people who had only written to him asking his help. During his lifetime he was known throughout Russia, as well as in the Western world. He has left us his diary *My Life in Christ* as a spiritual treasure for Christians of every age; simple in language, it expounds the deepest mysteries of our Faith with that wisdom which is given only to a heart purified by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Foreseeing as a true prophet the Revolution of 1917, he unsparingly rebuked the growing apostasy among the people; he foretold that the very name of Russia would be changed. As the darkness of unbelief grew thicker, he shone forth as a beacon of unquenchable piety, comforting the faithful through the many miracles that he worked and the fatherly love and simplicity with which he received all. Saint John reposed in peace in 1908." (*Great Horologion*)

Holy Prophet Joel (8th c. BC)

His name means "The Lord is God." He is counted second among the "minor Prophets." The Old Testament book of his prophecies, which bears his name, includes his prophecy of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Joel 2:28), which was quoted by the Apostle Peter (Acts 2:17).

Holy Martyr Varus and those with him (304)

"He was a Roman officer in Egypt and a secret Christian. When seven Christian teachers were thrown into prison, Varus kept visiting them there, supplying their needs and serving them with great devotion. He marvelled at the martyrs, and grieved that fear would not let him stand up as a martyr for Christ. These men of God gave him courage, and Varus made up his mind to go and be tortured with them. One of these godly men died in prison, and, when the wicked governor had the martyrs brought before him and saw that there were only six of them, he asked where the seventh was. 'I am the seventh!', cried Varus. The furious governor had him tortured first. He ordered that he be flogged with dry thongs, then that he be tied to a tree and hacked to pieces bit by bit with knives until he gave his holy soul to God. His body was then thrown onto a dung-heap. A woman of Palestinian birth, Cleopatra, the widow of an officer, was there with her son John. She secretly took the relics of the holy martyr off the dung-heap and buried them in her house. She then asked the governor's permission to take the body of her dead husband back from Egypt to Palestine. As she was an officer's widow, the governor at once gave her permission. This blessed Christian woman, Cleopatra, however, took the body, not of her husband but of the holy martyr Varus, taking it to her village of Edra, near Tabor, and burying it there. She then built a church dedicated to St Varus, and he appeared to her often from the other world, resplendent as an angel of God." (*Prologue*)

Holy Hieromartyr Sadoth (Shahdost) and his 123 companions (342)

During the fierce persecution of Christians by the Persian King Shapur II, Saint Sadoth succeeded the Martyr Symeon (April 17) as Bishop of Seleucia. His name in Persian, *Shah-dost*, means 'Friend of the King'; but the earthly Shah saw him as no friend, and the holy bishop knew that his days on earth were numbered. One night in a dream, Sadoth saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven. At the top stood Bishop Symeon, who called joyfully to him: 'Climb up, Sadoth, and do not be afraid! I climbed up yesterday; you will climb up today.' Waking, Sadoth knew that he would soon be called to martyrdom. He immediately set out to encourage his flock and to exhort them to stand firm for Christ in the coming day of persecution.

A few days later the persecutors came in the King's name to arrest the holy Bishop; with him they seized 123 priests, deacons, monks and simple believers. All were held in prison for five months, being brought forth repeatedly and tortured in ways too cruel to describe; but not a single one could be brought to worship the sun. Finally, all were condemned to die by the sword. The 123 martyrs, chained together, sang joyous hymns as they went to the place of execution. They did not

cease to sing until the death of the last Martyr. Sadoth himself, however, was taken in chains to the city of Beit Lapat, where he was beheaded a few days later.

OCTOBER 20

Holy Great Martyr Artemius (362)

He came from a noble family, and was appointed military Governor of Alexandria and Egypt by the Emperor Constantine the Great. Some years later, the Emperor Julian the Apostate strove to restore pagan idolatry as the official religion of the Empire. He also entered into a war with Persia, and established Antioch as his headquarters for pursuing the war. In Alexandria, Artemius received an order to come to Antioch with the military forces under his command. Artemius reported to the apostate Emperor just in time to see him ordering the cruel execution of two pious Christians, Eugenius and Macarius. Fearlessly, St Artemius immediately denounced the Emperor, telling him to his face that his anti-Christian policy was of demonic origin. The enraged Emperor instantly had Artemius stripped of all official rank and thrown into prison. The following day, he had Artemius brought before him and promised him high Imperial office if he would only renounce Christ and worship the idols. When Artemius forcefully refused to do this, he was publicly tortured to death. A pious noblewoman secretly recovered the Saint's relics and took them to Constantinople, where they were venerated and wrought many miracles for several centuries.

St Gerasimus the New, ascetic of Cephalonia (1579)

He was born in southern Greece. As a young man he left home and, after traveling to seek out guides in the ascetic life, he came to Mt Athos, where he was tonsured as a monk. Some years later he went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and there was ordained to the priesthood by Patriarch Germanus of Jerusalem. Once, while living in Jerusalem, he went into the Jordanian desert for forty days of fasting and prayer, in imitation of the Lord. After more travels through Sinai and he came to the Greek island of Zakynthos, where he lived alone in an isolated cave, sustaining himself only on vegetables. But his holiness soon attracted many of the faithful, who came to him for blessing and counsel. Mindful of the advice that nothing is more harmful to a monk as the praise of men, he fled to the island of Cephalonia, where he again took up life in a secluded cave. But once again he became known, and even more pilgrims gathered around him in search of spiritual nurture. This time, God made known to him that he must leave his beloved solitude in order to minister to others; so he founded a monastery called New Jerusalem on the island. St Gerasimus lived to a great age, and was granted foreknowledge of the day of his death. His relics are preserved on Cephalonia, "complete and incorrupt, as if he were asleep," according to the *Synaxarion*.

St Jonah, Bishop of Manchuria (1925) (October 7 OC)

Note: St Jonah's commemoration is October 7 on the Old Calendar, which falls on this day of the New Calendar.

He was orphaned in Russia at a young age, and, after attending the seminary in his home town of Kaluga, was tonsured as a monk at Optina Monastery. He was later ordained a priest, and taught in Kazan. In his thirtieth year (1918) the Bolsheviks seized power and he was forced to flee. After many persecutions and sufferings, he joined a large party of Russians who fled across Turkestan and the Gobi Desert into China. There he was made Bishop, and immediately began working tirelessly to encourage his flock and to provide for their material needs (most had arrived in China with only the clothes on their backs). He established churches, opened soup kitchens and an orphanage, cared personally for the sick, and in every way personified a true Minister of Christ.

When his death approached (from an infection acquired while caring for the sick) he donned his epitrachelion, read the Canon for the Departure of the Soul, lay down on his bed and said 'God's will be done. Now I shall die.' Within minutes he was dead. On the night of his funeral the Bishop appeared to a paralyzed ten-year-old boy, who was miraculously healed.

OCTOBER 21

St Hilarion the Great of Palestine (371)

He was born in Palestine to pagan parents who sent him to Alexandria to be educated. There he learned of the Christian faith and was baptized. Hearing of the fame of St Anthony the Great, he met the great "Father of monks," and determined to devote himself to the ascetical life. For the rest of his life he traveled from place to place, engaging in the most austere life of solitude, prayer and fasting. But wherever he went, his holiness shone like a beacon, and he became known to the people, who flocked to him for counsel, nurture and healing. He would then flee to another place and begin again. His travels took him to Egypt, Libya, Sicily, and finally Cyprus, where he reposed at a great age. As he lay on his deathbed, he cried out 'Go forth, O my soul. What do you fear? Go forth! Why are you disquieted within me? You have served Jesus Christ for almost seventy years and do you fear death?' Speaking these words, he died.

The *Synaxarion* gives an excruciatingly thorough description of his ascetical labors, which may be instructive:

"From his sixteenth to his twentieth year, Hilarion's shelter was a simple cabin made of bulrushes and marsh grasses. Afterwards, he built a little, low cell that looked more like a tomb than a house. He lay on the hard ground, and washed and cut his hair only once a year, on Easter day. He never washed the coat of skin that Saint Anthony gave him, and wore the same tunic until it fell to pieces. He knew all of Holy Scripture by heart and recited it aloud, standing with fear, as though God were visibly present. From his twenty-first to his twenty-seventh year, a few lentils soaked in cold water was, for three years, his daily food, and for the next three he took nothing but bread, sprinkled with salt. From his twenty-seventh to his thirtieth year, he lived on wild plants; from the age of thirty to thirty-five, on six ounces of barley bread and a few vegetables, cooked without oil. Then, falling ill and with failing eyesight, he added a little oil to his food but did not increase his allowance of bread, even though he saw his body grow weaker, and believed his death was near. At an age when others tend to decrease their austerities, he kept to this diet with redoubled fervor, like a young novice, until his death. He never ate until after sunset and relinquished his fast neither for the greatest feasts nor the gravest illnesses."

Holy New Martyr John of Monembasia (1773)

"Saint John was from Monembasia in the Peloponnese. At that time the region was under the Turkish yoke and subject to frequent raids from Albanians who captured Christians to sell them as slaves. In the course of one such attack, John's father was killed and the young boy and his mother were taken as captives to Larissa, where they were sold to a Turk from Thessalonica. This man, who had no son, wanted to adopt John and make him a Muslim. But nothing was able to persuade the fifteen-year-old youth: attractive promises, threatened beatings, the magic arts the Turk's wife used to make him lose his chastity, all were in vain. John remained as immovable as a rock and preferred to starve for days on end than break the fasts of the Church. The Turk became enraged at his failure to prevail over his young slave, and ran a sword into his stomach. For two days John suffered in agony before he departed to the abode of the blessed." (*Synaxarion*)

OCTOBER 22

St Abercius, Bishop of Hierapolis, Wonderworker and Equal to the Apostles (167)

He was bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia of Asia Minor, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, a persecutor of Christians. During a pagan festival, Abercius was instructed by an Angel to throw down the idols of Apollo and other pagan gods. When his work was discovered, the people of the city were outraged; but instead of hiding, the bishop went to the marketplace and openly confessed the Christian faith. The people grew angrier still, but when Abercius healed three possessed men they were amazed and listened to him more closely. He preached the Faith with such power that the entire city and surrounding countryside became Christian.

These miracles reached the ears of the Emperor, whose daughter was suffering from demonic possession. The Emperor summoned Abercius to Rome, where he was enabled to cast out the spirit and perform several other miracles. The Empress offered him a large reward of gold for healing her daughter, but he would not accept it. On his way home, he was instructed in a vision to travel to Syria. He travelled first to Antioch and surrounding cities, then as far as Mesopotamia, proclaiming Christ and teaching the faith everywhere he went. No other bishop of his time travelled so widely in the service of the Gospel; for this reason he is called Equal to the Apostles.

After several years he returned to Phrygia, where he lived the remainder of his life in peace, shepherding his flock.

Venerable Lot of Egypt (5th c.)

He was one of the company of ascetic Fathers who fled the world into the Egyptian desert in the fourth and fifth centuries.

Once Abba Lot went to his spiritual father Joseph and asked him, simply, "What shall I do to be saved?" Abba Joseph stretched his hands toward heaven and his fingers became ten flames. He said, "If you desire it, you can become entirely as a fire."

A brother once came to Abba Lot in terrible distress and said to him, "I have committed a great sin, that I cannot admit to the Fathers." "Confess it to me and I will bear it for you," answered the Elder. "I have fallen into fornication," the brother said, "and to do so, I sacrificed to idols." The Elder said to him, "Take heart: no sin is beyond God's mercy. Repentance is always possible. Go and sit in your cave; eat only every other day, and we will each take an equal share of the burden of your offence." After three weeks of keeping the same penance, Abba Lot received assurance from God that the brother's repentance was acceptable. For the rest of his life, the brother served as the Elder's disciple.

Holy Seven Youths of Ephesus

They are also commemorated August 4. See that date for their story.

OCTOBER 23

† Holy Apostle James, the Brother of the Lord and First Bishop of Jerusalem (63)

His Hebrew name is Jacob. He was a close kinsman of Christ, and was therefore called, according to the Jewish usage of the

time, his "brother." Some accounts say that he was a child of Joseph by his first marriage; others accounts say that he was the son of Joseph's brother Cleopas and his wife Mary, who was first cousin of the Theotokos. He took the Nazirite vows of one completely consecrated to God according to the Law, and from a young age he was called "the Just" by his people. He is called James the Lesser in Scripture (Mark 15:40) to distinguish him from James the son of Zebedee, who is called the Greater. The Apostles appointed him first Bishop of Jerusalem. It was he who presided at the earliest Council of the Church in Jerusalem, where he resolved the problem of how gentile converts should be received into the Church (see Acts 15). He wrote the New Testament Epistle, addressed primarily to Jewish converts to the Faith, that bears his name. About the year 62, he ascended to the peak of the Temple in Jerusalem on Passover, and there bore witness to Christ so effectively that the people cried out "Hosanna to the Son of David." At this, the Scribes and Pharisees, fearing that all the people would be converted to Christ, cast him down to the ground. By God's grace, he survived long enough to rise, kneel and pray, like his Master, "Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do." He was then clubbed to death by one of the scribes.

Saint Macarius the Roman of Mesopotamia (?)

"Three holy men who lived in asceticism in the Monastery of St Asclepius in Mesopotamia decided to walk up and down the world in search of a sign from God for their salvation. As they approached a cave, deep in the wilderness, they became aware all at once of a marvellous scent and saw an old man coming towards them covered only by his hair and the beard that fell to his knees. He cast himself to the earth and remained there for a while, until he was sure the three strangers were not demons. Then he brought them into his cave, where he lived with two lions. They asked him to tell them his story, which he did.

"His name was Macarius, the son of a rich senator of Rome. When he reached marriageable age, his parents betrothed him against his will. On his wedding night, at the moment of entering the bridal chamber in the midst of the festivities, he fled to a pious widow's, where he spent seven days in hiding, weeping and entreating the help of God. As he left her house, an old man of kindly and noble demeanour came by, and told him to follow. And, indeed, Macarius followed him for three years, until the moment of arrival near the cave, when the old man vanished. He appeared to Macarius in a dream soon after, and revealed that he was the Archangel Raphael, who had once been the guide of Tobias in his travels. Before departing, the Archangel entrusted him to the care of God and of two lion cubs that had just lost their mother.

"Some while after, Macarius saw, standing before him, a most beautiful maiden, who told him that she too had fled marriage in Rome. Macarius did not have discernment enough to escape the Devil's trap, and welcomed her to spend the night in his cave. During the night, he was violently attacked, for the first time in his life, by the fiery darts of carnal desire. The pretended maiden suddenly disappeared, as the Devil triumphed in his success at introducing the thought of sin into the mind of the ascetic. Macarius then realized the gravity of his fall in the sight of God. Weeping bitterly, he made up his mind to leave the cave and find somewhere else to do penance. But, on his way, the Archangel Raphael appeared to him anew and urged him to return, for it was in his cave that God would hear his prayer. So he went back and sorely afflicted his flesh with fasting, vigils and utter abnegation for many years, in order to regain a heart of unsullied purity in which to contemplate the image of God.

"When he had edified the three brethren with the story of his struggles, Macarius sent them away in peace and fell asleep in the Lord, unknown to all, in the presence only of the angels and the saints." (*Synaxarion*)

Not even the century of the Saint's life is given in our sources.

OCTOBER 24

Holy Martyr Arethas and those with him (524)

These Martyrs contested for piety's sake in the year 524 in Najran, a city of Arabia Felix (present-day Yemen). When Dhu Nuwas, ruler of the Himyarite tribe in south Arabia, and a Judaizer, took power, he sought to blot out Christianity, especially at Najran, a Christian city. Against the counsels of Arethas, chief man of Najran, the city surrendered to Dhu Nuwas, who immediately broke the word he had given and sought to compel the city to renounce Christ. Led by Saint Arethas, hundreds of martyrs, including women, children, and babes, valiantly withstood his threats, and were beheaded and burned. After the men had been slain, all the free-born Christian women of Najran were brought before the tyrant and commanded to abjure Christ or die; yet they rebuked the persecutor with such boldness that he said even the men had not insulted him so contemptuously. So great was their faith that not one woman was found to deny Christ in all Najran, although some of them suffered torments more bitter than most of the men. In alliance with Byzantium, the Ethiopian King Elesbaan liberated Najran from Dhu Nuwas soon after and raised up churches in honour of the Martyrs. Najran became a place of pilgrimage until the rise of Islam a century later. At the end of his life King Elesbaan, who was also called Caleb, retired into solitude as a hermit; he sent his crown to Jerusalem as an offering to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. He also is commemorated on this day as a saint. Saint Arethas' name in Arabic, *Harith*, means "plowman, tiller," much the same as

"George" in Greek.) (*Great Horologion*)

Ethiopia is still a Christian nation, surrounded by Islamic states. The late Emperor Haile Selassie's name means, in Ethiopian, "Power of the Trinity."

OCTOBER 25

Holy Martyrs Marcian and Martyrius (346)

Both lived in Constantinople and were disciples of the Patriarch St Paul the Confessor (November 6), murdered in exile by the Arians. During the reign of the Arian Emperor Constantius, They fearlessly confessed that the Son of God is of one essence with the Father and is truly God. For their confession they were beheaded by the Arians and buried outside the city. Soon afterward, miracles began to be wrought at their tomb; and St John Chrysostom later built a church over it.

St Tabitha of Joppa

She was restored to life by the Apostle Peter (Acts 9:39-40), and afterwards died in peace.

OCTOBER 26

† Holy, Glorious and Great Martyr Demetrius the Outpourer of Myrrh (306)

He was a native of Thessalonica, born of noble parents. His wisdom and distinction in battle earned him rapid advancement in the service of the Empire: in time he was appointed commander of all the Roman forces in Thessaly, and Proconsul of Hellas. Despite these worldly honors, Demetrius put his Christian faith before all, and by his words and example brought many pagans to faith in Christ.

When the Emperor Maximian, a persecutor of Christians, came to Thessalonica he appointed games and public sacrifices to celebrate his recent victory over the Scythians. Some jealous pagans used the visit to denounce Demetrius to the Emperor. Maximian had Demetrius cast into a fetid cell in the basement of some nearby baths. Maximian had brought with him a huge barbarian of tremendous strength named Lyaos, who fought many men in the arena and defeated them all, to the entertainment of the Emperor and the crowds. A young Christian named Nestor determined to show the people that the only true strength is in Christ: he visited Demetrius in his cell and asked for his blessing to challenge Lyaos to combat. The Martyr made the sign of the Cross over Nestor and sent him to the arena with his blessing. Nestor, a young boy, cried out before the Emperor 'God of Demetrius, help me!' and quickly killed the mighty Lyaos, to the astonishment of the crowd. The infuriated Emperor had Nestor slain with his own sword, and sent soldiers to Demetrius' cell, where they killed him with their spears. Demetrius' servant, a believer named Lupus, retrieved the body of Demetrius and buried it with honor. He kept the Saint's ring and blood-stained tunic, and through them worked several miracles and healings. When the Emperor heard of this, he had Lupus, too, beheaded.

As a sign of the grace that rested on the holy Demetrius, a fragrant myrrh flowed copiously from the Martyr's body after his death, healing many of the sick. For many centuries, St Demetrius has been a patron Saint of Thessalonica.

OCTOBER 27

Holy Martyr Nestor, Companion of St Demetrius (306)

See St Demetrius, commemorated yesterday, October 26.

St. Procla, the wife of Pontius Pilate.

When Pilate was about to judge Christ, Procla attempted to dissuade him, saying "Have nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." Pilate ignored her warning. (See Matthew 27). St Procla reposed in peace.

Our Venerable Father Demetrius of Basarabov (Romania) (13th c.)

He was born early in the thirteenth century to a peasant family in the village of Basarov, then part of Bulgaria. Even in childhood, he gave himself to fasting and prayer. Once, walking across a field, he accidentally stepped on a bird's nest in the grass, killing the young birds. He was so filled with remorse that he went barefoot for three years, winter and summer, in penance. When he was grown he joined a monastery and, after a few years of community life, received a blessing to dwell in a cave near the River Lom. After many years of solitary struggle, he reposed in his cave. Three hundred years passed, during which all memory of the simple ascetic was lost. Then, one Spring the river flooded the cave and carried off Demetrius' body, which had lain incorrupt in the cave for centuries. The body was carried downstream and buried in gravel. Another hundred years went by, and the Saint appeared in a dream to a paralyzed girl, telling her to ask her parents to take her to the river bank, where she would be healed. The family, along with many clergy and villagers, went to a spot where some local people had earlier seen an unexplained light. They dug and soon unearthed the still-incorrupt and radiant body of St Demetrius, by which the girl was instantly healed. A church was built in the village of Basarabov to honor the precious

relics, and through the years the Saint worked many miracles there.

In 1774, during the Russian-Turkish war, General Peter Saltikov ordered the holy relics taken to Russia so that they would not be desecrated by the Turks. When the relics came to Bucharest, a pious Christian friend of the General begged him not to deprive the country of one of its most precious saints; so the General took only one of the Saint's hands, sending it to the Kiev Caves Lavra. Saint Demetrius' body was placed in the cathedral of Bucharest, where it has been venerated ever since. Every year on October 27, a three-day festival is held in the Saint's honor, attended by crowds of the faithful.

OCTOBER 28

St Dimitri (Demetrius) of Rostov (1709)

Born near Kiev, he was raised in piety and, at the early age of eleven, entered the Ecclesiastical Academy of Kiev. At the age of seventeen he was professed as a monk. A few years later he was ordained to the priesthood. Despite his constant desire to retire into a life of asceticism and solitude, his many gifts were needed by the Church and, much against his will, he spent most of his life engaged in writing and other labors. The Abbot of the Lavra of the Kiev Caves, knowing his scholarly abilities, called him to compile a Russian-language Lives of the Saints, a work to which he devoted himself tirelessly for twenty-five years.

This compilation was not a dry exercise for him; he approached each Saint's life with prayer, and was often granted visions. The holy Martyr Barbara appeared to him in his sleep in 1685; when he asked her to intercede for him to the Lord, she chided him for praying "in the Latin Way," that is, for using short prayers. Seeing his distress at being so rebuked, she smiled and said "Do not be afraid!"

St Demetrius was elevated to the episcopal throne (of Metropolitan of Tobolsk and Siberia) in 1701, but asked to be transferred due to ill health, and because the Siberian see would not allow him to continue his research. So he was assigned to the Diocese of Rostov in 1702; he received a divine revelation that he would end his years there. He completed his monumental Lives of the Saints in 1705; thereafter he devoted his energies to the care of his flock, the education of priests, and many spiritual writings, including several addressed to the schismatic "Old Believers," pleading with them to rejoin the canonical Church.

Despite his poor health, he maintained a life of strict prayer and fasting, and encouraged his faithful, in his sermons and writings, to do the same. He predicted his own death three days beforehand. The Synaxarion concludes: "the holy Bishop fell at the feet of his servants and chanters, and asked their forgiveness. Then, with an ardent prayer on his lips, he shut himself in his cell. The next morning, 28 October 1709, they discovered him dead upon his knees. The relics of Saint Demetrius were found incorrupt in 1752 and they wrought many healings. He was formally glorified by the Church in 1757.

Our Holy Father Firmilian, Bishop of Caesarea (268)

Born to a noble family of Caesarea in Cappadocia, he studied under Origen with his friend St Gregory the Wonderworker (November 17). He became Bishop of Caesarea around 230. In 252 he took part in the Council of Antioch, which condemned the schismatic Novatian and his followers, who denied all hope of repentance and restoration to the Church for those who had denied the Faith to avoid persecution.

Firmilian devoted much energy to defending the churches of Asia and Africa from unlawful domination by Pope Stephen of Rome. The Asian and African churches baptized heretics who returned to the Church; Rome reconciled them simply by the laying on of hands. Firmilian did not condemn the Roman practice, but zealously opposed the local churches' right to keep their practice, rather than have the Pope dictate the practices of the entire Church.

The holy Bishop was then called upon to combat the heresy of Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch. Paul taught that the Word of God is not one in essence with the Father, but is only a word of divine inspiration sent to the man Jesus. (This is undoubtedly the belief of many 'Christians' today!) Seeing in this teaching a complete denial of our salvation in Christ, fully man and fully God, Firmilian called three successive Councils (in 263, 266 and 268) to deal with the heresy. The first two were undermined by Paul and his party; but at the third the heresy was finally condemned and Paul of Samosata excommunicated. Saint Firmilian died in the city of Tarsus while traveling to this Council.

Holy Hieromartyr Cyriacus, Bishop of Jerusalem, and his mother Anna (4th c.)

Cyriacus was born a Jew and bore the name Judas before believing in Christ. He was one of the workers employed by Saint Helena when she came to Jerusalem to uncover the Cross of Christ. Thus, he was an eye-witness to the Cross' discovery and the many miracles wrought by it; he believed in Christ, was baptized, and in time became a Bishop in the Church of Jerusalem. He lived into the reign of Julian the Apostate (361-363). The tyrannical Emperor, who was passing through Palestine on the way to Persia (where he would die), had the holy bishop seized and subjected to horrid tortures to force him to deny Christ. Cyriacus' mother Anna rushed to his side to encourage him and bid him farewell; she also was seized, and the two gave up their souls to God on the same day.

OCTOBER 29

Holy Virgin Martyr Anastasia of Rome (256)

She lived in Rome during the reigns of the Emperors Decius and Valerian. At an early age she left all to embrace a life of unceasing prayer, entering a small monastery in Rome, directed by a nun named Sophia. For her Christian faith, she was seized and brought before the governor Probus and, when she boldly confessed Christ and refused to honor the idols, was subjected to a series of vicious tortures, under which she died. An angel led Sophia to retrieve her holy relics, which are now venerated at the monastery of Grigoriou on Mt Athos.

We are sometimes told that monasticism developed in the Church after Christianity became accepted and grew more worldly. The story of St Anastasia is one of many evidences in the lives of the Saints that what we now call monasticism was present from the earliest days of the Church.

Our Holy Father Abramius (366) and his niece Mary (371) of Mesopotamia

Abramius was a Christian of noble birth who, early in life, left all (including a young bride) to live as a solitary monk. This he did for fifty years. When Abramius' brother died, leaving his seven-year-old daughter Mary orphaned and alone, The Saint took her under his care, giving her a monastic cell near his own. Though Mary devoted herself joyfully to the monastic life, when she was about twenty she fell into sin with a corrupt monk who visited the hermitage. Far worse, she then fell into despair, thinking that she had cast away her salvation, and fled the hermitage to become a harlot in a nearby town. Abramius, unaware of what had happened or where she had gone, prayed constantly for her safety and to be shown where she had fled.

One day a traveler told Abramius what had become of his niece. Immediately he rose up, dressed himself as a soldier and went to the brothel where Mary worked, "for the salvation of a soul meant more to him than hermitage, Habit, asceticism or prayer itself" (Synaxarion). Still disguised, he ordered a meal, his first wine and meat for fifty years, then went with Mary to her room. Only then did he reveal himself, and with tears, not accusing her at all, pleaded with her to leave that place and return with him. "Let us go, my child; let us return to our hermitage. Let your fault be mine. I will answer for it before Christ on the day of judgment." She returned with him and, with repentance, prayed so ardently that she was soon granted not only assurance of forgiveness but the power to work miracles. St Abramius reposed in peace in great old age; Mary followed him into eternal joy five years later.

OCTOBER 30

Holy Martyrs Zenobius and his sister Zenobia (~290)

These two holy ones were brother and sister, living the city of Aegea in Cilicia. When their parents died, they gave all their possessions to the poor. Zenobius, a physician, gave his healing services for free to all who came to him, often relying more upon the holy Name of Jesus than upon medicines. In time, he became Bishop of Aegea. During the persecutions under the Emperor Diocletian, Zenobius was arrested and brought before the governor Lysias, who demanded that he deny Christ and worship the idols. When Zenobius refused, he was subjected to torture. Zenobia, hearing of this, rushed to be with him and openly rebuked the governor. The two were then tortured together and finally beheaded, faithful to their Lord to the end.

Holy Apostle Cleopas

He is numbered among the Seventy. On the day of the Resurrection, Cleopas and St Luke were walking on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus when the Risen Christ appeared to them, as recounted in the twenty-fourth chapter of St Luke's Gospel.

The Gospel account does not name St Cleopas' companion, but the holy tradition of the Church tells us that it was St Luke himself, and thus that the story is a first-hand account.

St Joseph I, Patriarch of Constantinople (1283)

Once a married priest, he entered monastic life when his wife died, and became the spiritual father of the Emperor Michael VIII Paleologus, during whose reign he was elevated to the Patriarchate. Despite this patronage, St Joseph's integrity was inviolable: At his first Divine Liturgy as Patriarch, he required the Emperor publicly to confess and repent of several sins before admitting him to Communion. He fiercely opposed the Emperor's expedient policy of union with Rome, and was therefore deposed, retiring once more to monastic life. In old age, he was restored to the Patriarchal throne upon the death of Emperor Michael, but died a few months later.

Holy Martyr Hermengild, Prince of the Visigoths (486)

He was the son and appointed heir of Leuvigild, King of the Visigoths, who had embraced the Christianity of the Arian heretics. But through the teaching of Bishop Leander of Seville (February 27), Hermengild was converted to the fullness of the Orthodox faith, for which his father the King had him thrown in prison. On the day of Pascha 486, the King sent one of his priests to give his son communion. But Hermengild refused, proclaiming that to commune with heretics is to assent to

their belief and to sink into their error; going further, he told the priest that the heretics' communion was nothing but bread and wine, for the Body and Blood of Christ are found only in the Offering made by the Church. The enraged King sent soldiers, who at his orders put his own son to death. Later, the King repented of this inhuman deed and asked Bishop Leander to instruct his youngest son Recared in the Orthodox faith. Thus the Visigoth people was brought into the Faith.

Holy Hieromartyr John Kochurov, First Hieromartyr of the Russian Revolution (1917)

He was born in Russia in 1871, and as a young priest was sent to America as a missionary. There he worked zealously (he was instrumental in the building of the Orthodox cathedral in Chicago) until he was called back to Russia just before the October Revolution in 1917. Only six days after the Bolsheviks seized power, he was beaten to death in the street by a gang of Bolshevik sailors in Tsarskoye Selo near St Petersburg. Thus he became the first of countless Priest-Martyrs of Russia's atheist yoke.

OCTOBER 31

Holy Apostles Stachys, Apelles, Amplias, Urban, Narcissus and Aristobolus.

They are numbered among the Seventy. All six are mentioned by St Paul in the sixteenth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. Stachys was appointed Bishop of Byzantium by the Apostle Andrew, and reposed in peace in AD 54. Apelles became Bishop of Heraclea in Asia Minor. Amplias and Urban were made Bishops in Macedonia by St Andrew; both died as Martyrs. Narcissus became Bishop of Athens and died a Martyr. Aristobolus became Bishop of Britain, where he reposed in peace.

New Martyr Nicholas of Chios (1754)

Raised in piety, he worked as a stone-mason until an accident deprived him of his reason and of the power of speech. The local Turkish rulers took advantage of his condition to declare him a Muslim. For years thereafter he was employed shepherd until he met a monk named Cyril, who prayed fervently that he be restored to his senses. He was miraculously restored, and almost immediately was filled with the desire to repent and to live only for Christ, devoting himself to prayer, fasting and vigil. Some time later he was falsely suspected of a crime by the (Christian) people of his village, and brought before the Turkish authorities. When he was questioned, he declared 'I was born a Christian, I was brought up as a Christian, I have never denied Christ for Islam, and I never will deny Him, but will die a Christian.' For this he was brutally tortured. Many local Christians, including the village priest, feared for their own safety and urged him to deny Christ, but Nicholas only rebuked them and stood firm. After many days of torture he was finally slain by the sword. The *Synaxarion* tells how a thick darkness fell on the whole island of Chios. When the dismayed Turks burned the Martyr's body to be rid of this miracle, they were further dismayed when a heavenly scent rose from the flames, revealing the Saint's entry into eternal glory.

† 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 Omylia Monastery;
The Prologue from Ochrid by St Nikolai of Zika (Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic);
and the *Great Horologion*, published by Holy Transfiguration Monastery.

