

# God is Wonderful in His Saints

## Orthodox Saints commemorated in September

### SEPTEMBER 1

#### † The Beginning of the Church's Year

The First Ecumenical Council established that the Church's year would begin on September 1st, continuing the practice of the Roman Empire at that time. For centuries, the beginning of the civil year coincided with the Church year, but later changed, first in western Europe, then in Russia in the time of Peter the Great.

#### † Our Holy Father Symeon Stylites (459)

Born in Syria, he was a shepherd, but at the age of eighteen he left home and became a monk, practicing the strictest asceticism. At times he fasted for forty days. After a few years at a monastery he took up an ascetical discipline unique at that time: mounting a pillar, he stood on it night and day in prayer. Though he sought only seclusion and prayer, his holiness became famous, and thousands would make pilgrimage to receive a word from him or to touch his garments. Countless nomadic Arabs came to faith in Christ through the power of his example and prayers. To retreat further from the world, he used progressively taller pillars: his first pillar was about ten feet high, his final one about fifty. He was known also for the soundness of his counsel: he confirmed the Orthodox doctrine at the Council of Chalcedon and persuaded the Empress Eudocia, who had been seduced by Monophysite beliefs, to return to the true Christian faith. After about forty years lived in asceticism, he reposed in peace at the age of sixty-nine.

He was at first suspected of taking up his way of life out of pride, but his monastic brethren confirmed his humility thus: They went to him as a group, and told him that the brotherhood had decided that he should come down from his pillar and rejoin them. Immediately he began to climb down from the pillar. Seeing his obedience and humility, they told him to remain with their blessing.

#### Righteous Joshua, Son of Nun

In the Septuagint he is called *Jesus*, the Greek form of *Joshua*. Of the Hebrews who fled Egypt in the Exodus, only he and Caleb were found worthy to enter the Promised Land. He was Moses' chosen successor to lead the Hebrew people. Read his story in the Old Testament book that bears his name. He reposed at the age of 110, about 1500 years before Christ.

#### Saint Meletios the Younger (1095-1124)

He was born in Cappadocia around 1035. He became a monk in Constantinople, but after a few years he went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Rome, then settled at a small monastery near Thebes. Here Meletios became known for his piety: he wore one garment of woven horsehair and, as the Synaxarion says, 'never let his eyelids slumber without having bathed the mat he lay on with his tears.' After twenty-eight years of ascetical labors Meletios, seeking to escape his increasing renown, departed the monastery, eventually settling near the Monastery of the Bodiless Powers near Myoupolis in Greece. Here he thought that he would be able to pray in obscurity, but once again the fame of his virtues attracted a monastic community around him. By order of the Patriarch of Constantinople he was ordained to the priesthood and, much against his will, made abbot of the monastic colony. The Emperor Alexander Comnenus wished to give a large gift of money to the monastery, but the Saint, unwilling to store up wealth on earth, would only accept enough for the essential needs of his monks: 'but' (the Synaxarion says) 'as a sign of gratitude, he protected the pious Emperor in all his campaigns from that time forth, by his prayer.' After many years caring for the monastery, in which he revealed gifts of healing, insight and prophecy, Saint Meletios reposed in peace, aged about seventy years, sometime between 1095 and 1124.

#### Holy New Martyr Angelis (1680)

He was a goldsmith living in Constantinople. While he was celebrating the Dormition of the Theotokos with some friends in a nearby village, the party was joined by some Turkish neighbors. The Christians and Turks drank a great amount together, and at one point entertained themselves by exchanging headgear. The next day, when everyone had sobered up, a Turk asked Angelis why he was not wearing a Muslim turban, for wearing it once was a sign of conversion. (To our knowledge this is not Islamic law, but was a ploy to pressure the young Angelis into conversion.) The dismayed Angelis was brought before a judge and given the choice of converting to Islam or being put to torture and death. Though the young man had shown little seriousness about his faith before this, he was filled with the Holy Spirit and boldly confessed Christ, willingly accepting a Martyr's end. He was beheaded on Sunday, September 1, 1680.

### SEPTEMBER 2

Martyr Mammas of Caesarea in Cappadocia (275), and his parents, Martyrs Theodotus and Rufina

He began his life in the cruelest of circumstances: both of his parents were imprisoned for their faith in Christ. First his father, Theodotus, died in prison, then his mother, Rufina, died shortly after his birth, so the infant was left alone in prison beside the bodies of his parents. But an angel appeared to the widow Ammia, telling her to go to the prison and rescue the child. Ammia obtained the city governor's permission to bury the parents and bring the child home. He was called Mamas because he was mute until the age of five and his first word was 'Mama'. Despite his late beginning, he showed unusual intelligence and, having been brought up in piety, soon openly proclaimed his Christian faith. When he was only fifteen years old he was arrested and brought before the Emperor Aurelian. The Emperor, perhaps seeking to spare the boy, told him to deny Christ only with his lips, and the State would not concern itself with his heart. Mamas replied 'I shall not deny my God and King Jesus Christ either in my heart or with my lips.' He was sent to be tortured, but miraculously escaped and lived in the mountains near Caesarea. There he lived in solitude and prayer and befriended many wild beasts. In time, he was discovered by the persecutors and stabbed to death with a trident by a pagan priest.

#### St John IV, Patriarch of Constantinople, known as John the Faster (595)

He was born and raised in Constantinople. When he came of age he worked as a goldsmith and an engraver at the mint; but renouncing worldly things, he was ordained a deacon and given charge of the distribution of alms in Constantinople. He gave freely to all with no consideration of their worthiness. The *Synaxarion* says 'the more he distributed the more God filled his purse, so that it seemed inexhaustible.'

Upon the death of Patriarch Eutyches in 582, John became Patriarch and reigned for thirteen years, reposing in peace in 595. (It was during his reign that the term "Ecumenical Patriarch" began to be used to refer to the Patriarch of Constantinople.) St John was known for his great asceticism and fasting, and as a powerful intercessor and wonderworker. So generous was he to the poor that he used up all his funds in almsgiving and had to ask the Emperor for a loan, which he used to give more alms. After his repose, his only possessions were found to be an old cassock, a linen shirt and a wooden spoon.

#### Righteous Eleazar, son of Aaron and second High Priest of Israel

He was the son of Aaron, the first High Priest of Israel, and he in turn became the second High Priest. He reposed in peace.

#### Repose of Hieromonk Seraphim (Rose) of Platina (1962). (August 20 OC)

This modern-day pioneer of Orthodoxy and monasticism in America has not been glorified as a Saint of the Church, though many individuals ask his prayers and icons of him have been painted.

Eugene Rose was born in 1934 in California, where he spent all his life. Following an intense spiritual search that took him through study of several Eastern Religions (he earned a graduate degree in Chinese Philosophy), he providentially encountered the Russian Orthodox community in San Francisco, and in 1962 was received into the Orthodox Church. The sanctity of Archbishop (now Saint) John Maximovich was especially important to his development in the Faith.

After a few more years living in the world, he and his friend Gleb Podmosensky founded a small monastic brotherhood in the wilderness of far northern California; in time they were tonsured as monks and ordained as priests: Fr Seraphim and Fr Herman. At a time when Orthodoxy was almost invisible in North America, the monastery became a beacon of Orthodoxy for Americans seeking an authentic Christian faith.

Fr Seraphim reposed in 1982 at the age of forty-eight. Many of his writings are still in print. A biography, *Father Seraphim Rose: His life and works*, by Hieromonk Damascene, is highly recommended.

#### SEPTEMBER 3

#### Hieromartyr Anthimos, bishop of Nicomedia, and those with him (303-304)

"After the death of the 20,000 Martyrs of Nicomedia (see Dec. 28), their Bishop Anthimos fled to a certain village to care for his remaining flock. The Emperor Maximian sent men in search of him. When they found him, he promised to show Anthimos to them, but first took them in as guests, fed them, and only then made himself known to them. Amazed at his kindness, the soldiers promised him to tell Maximian that they had not found him. But Anthimos went willingly with them, and converting them by his admonitions, baptized them on the way. He boldly confessed his Faith before Maximian, and after frightful tortures was beheaded in the year 303 or 304." (*Great Horologion*)

Our Holy Father Theoctistus, Fellow Ascetic of St Euthymius (451), is also commemorated today. A faithful disciple of St Euthymius, he was abbot of St Euthymius' monastery in Palestine until his repose in peace at the age of ninety.

#### Holy Martyr Basilissa (309)

She lived near Nicomedia during the great persecution by the Emperor Diocletian. Though she was only nine years old, she was arrested and brought before Alexander, the Governor of Bithynia. When she fearlessly proclaimed her faith in Christ, the Governor had her stripped and beaten, but she only gave thanks to God. Enraged at the steadfastness of a mere child, the Governor ordered her chained and plunged head-first into boiling pitch, then cast into a blazing furnace, then thrown to

the lions. Through all these torments she was miraculously preserved. Astonished at the wonders that he beheld, Alexander fell at Basilissa's feet and confessed that he too believed that Christ is the Savior. He was baptized by the Bishop of Nicomedia and died not long afterward. Basilissa went into the wilderness outside the city to give thanks to God for her endurance under torture and to ask Him to receive her soul in peace. While praying in this way, she entered into her rest. Our Holy Father Joannicius, Archbishop and first Patriarch of Serbia (1354)

"Born in Prizrem, he served as first secretary to King Dušan. He became Archbishop in 1339, and in 1346 was raised to the rank of Patriarch. He was a zealous pastor, and brought order to the Serbian Church, being 'a great upholder of the Church's laws'. He entered into rest on September 3rd, 1349, and his relics are preserved at Pec'." (*Prologue*)

#### SEPTEMBER 4

**Hieromartyr Babylas, bishop of Antioch, and those with him (251)**

He was archbishop of Antioch at the time of the wicked Emperor Numerian. Once the Emperor came to Antioch and attempted to enter a church where Babylas was serving. Coming to the door, the Archbishop forbade the Emperor, as a pagan and a shedder of innocent blood, to enter the house where the True God was worshipped. Retreating in humiliation, the Emperor determined to take his revenge. Shortly after he had Babylas imprisoned along with several Christian children. Babylas was made to watch the beheading of each of the children. Having given them encouragement he submitted himself to beheading. At his own request he was buried in the chains with which he had been bound.

After the establishment of Christianity in the Roman Empire, the Emperor Gallus had a church built in honor of Babylas near the site of a temple to Apollos at Daphne, outside Antioch. (This was where, according to pagan legend, the maiden Daphne had been turned into a tree to escape the lust of Apollos). When Julian the Apostate came to Antioch in 362 to consult a famous oracle there, he found that the oracle had been deprived of its power by the presence of a Christian church nearby. He ordered the relics of St Babylas to be dug up and removed from the Church. As soon as this had been done a thunderbolt destroyed the shrine of Apollo, which Julian did not dare to rebuild. Saint John Chrysostom, then Archbishop of Antioch, preached a sermon on these events within a generation after their occurrence.

**Holy Prophet Moses, who beheld God.**

What can we say of Moses? For his story read the Old Testament books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The Church holds him to be the author of the Pentateuch or Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament.

**St John Mavropos, Metropolitan of Euchaita (1100)**

He is best known for his part in the institution of the Synaxis of Sts Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom (see January 30). The three holy hierarchs appeared to him and revealed that all three are united and equally honored in heaven, thus dispelling a spirit of factionalism that was disturbing Constantinople. He is the composer of the Canon to the Most Sweet Jesus and the Canon to the Guardian Angel, both found in many prayer books. He reposed in peace. *Mavropos* is a nickname meaning 'Black-foot'.

He is commemorated on June 14 on the Slavic Calendar.

**St Hermione, daughter of Apostle Philip (1st c.)**

She was one of the four daughters of the Apostle Philip the Deacon (October 11). As we read in the Acts of the Apostles (21:8), all four were virgins and prophets. Her fame as a prophetess and a worker of miraculous healings attracted the attention of the Emperor Hadrian, under whose tribunal she was cruelly tortured. It is written that throughout her torments the only sounds that came from her lips were verses of the Psalms. At last she was sentenced to death; when the executioners raised the sword to behead her they were struck with paralysis, but St Hermione healed them by her prayer. At this, the executioners believed in Christ and laid down the sword. Saint Hermione was buried at Ephesus.

**Venerable Anthimos the Blind, New Ascetic (1732)**

He was born on the island of Kephallonia in 1727, with the name Athanasios Kourouklis. At the age of seven he became blind as a result of smallpox. His devout mother prayed for his healing, and asked her priest to serve forty Liturgies for her son's healing. At the fortieth Liturgy, as the priest said 'In the fear of God and with faith and love draw near,' Athanasios cried out that he could see the priest's vestments and chalice. He had recovered sight in his right eye. For a time he followed his father's occupation as a seaman, but then took up the life of a monk, receiving the name Anthimos. At some point he went blind again, and soon thereafter had a vision: he was praying for the restoration of his sight before an icon of the Theotokos when two young men in radiant garments appeared and led him to the Mother of God herself, who told him 'Depart, for your continual prayer that I restore your sight is not profitable to you.' But the two young men pleaded for him, and the Theotokos said 'Anthimos, because of your great piety and many prayers, I will restore your sight in part, but do not forget that, having gained temporal vision, you can lose that which is eternal.' Thereafter, though Anthimos was almost completely blind, he could dimly discern the outlines of objects; but in compensation he was granted the gift of spiritual insight, and was

able to predict the future and call by name those he had never met.

Saint Anthimos was about twenty when he entered monastic life, and lived on Mt Athos for awhile. Despite his blindness, he then took up a life of missionary work that took him throughout the Greek mainland and islands. Traveling from place to place he preached the Gospel, healed the sick, founded several monasteries. Once he restored a blind woman's sight by his prayers, though he himself remained blind throughout his life. Throughout his amazing labors he maintained a life of the most severe asceticism, eating little, sleeping on a plank or on the floor.

In 1782, in the course of one of his many sea journeys, he told the sailors to change course for Cephalonia, saying 'God's will is not that I concern myself with [the mission he had undertaken], but that I go back and die in my monastery.' On returning he fell ill and called his spiritual children to him. 'My children, the hour has come for me to go where the Lord ordains. Death is the common lot of us all and is nothing to be afraid of. It is important rather to do your best to keep your promises and your monastic vows. The one thing necessary in this life is to please God and save your souls.' Having said this, he fell asleep in peace, at the age of fifty-four. He was glorified as a Saint in 1976.

*Note: It is sometimes said that celebrating Divine Liturgies for special intentions is 'not Orthodox.' The example of St Anthimos' mother shows that the practice is a both traditional and efficacious.*

**Holy New Martyr Gorazd, Bishop of Slovakia and the Czech Lands (1942) (August 22 OC)**

He was born in 1879 in Moravia and given the name Matthew Pavlik. He became a Roman Catholic priest, active in a movement for reform within the Roman Catholic Church. When Czechoslovakia became an independent state in 1919, about 800,000 Christians, including Fr Matthew, approached Bishop Dositheus of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Serbia, asking to be received into the Orthodox faith. Father Matthew was received into the Church in 1920; a year later was made Bishop of the Orthodox of Moravia and Silesia by Patriarch Demetrius of Serbia, and was named for St Gorazd, a disciple of St Methodius (July 27). Though many of the original 'reform' leaders turned back, finding the demands of Orthodoxy too difficult, Gorazd labored mightily for the restoration of Orthodoxy in Czechoslovakia: he established eleven parishes, translated the divine services into Czech, and published a Czech Prayer Book.

During the Second World War, two priests of the Orthodox Cathedral in Prague were arrested because some of the Czech resistance had taken refuge in the Cathedral. It was clear that the Nazis were planning retaliation against the entire Orthodox Church. Bishop Gorazd presented himself to the Nazis and, to save his priests, took full responsibility for the events in the Cathedral. He was arrested, tortured and finally shot on September 4 1942 (August 22 OC). Despite his selfless sacrifice, the Orthodox Church was severely persecuted by the Nazis: all the churches were closed and the priests sent to concentration camps in Germany.

Saint Gorazd was glorified by the Church of Serbia in 1961 and by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1987.

## SEPTEMBER 5

**Holy and Glorious Prophet Zacharias, Father of St John the Baptist**

Much of his story is told in the first chapter of Luke's Gospel. The *Synaxarion* continues:

'After the birth of Christ, Zacharias plainly declared the virginity of Mary and showed her truly to be the Mother of God; for he appointed her a place in that part of the Temple reserved for the virgins and so brought upon himself the hatred of the priests and levites.

'When John was six months old, Zacharias hid him and his mother in a cave beyond the Jordan because King Herod, hearing of the birth in Bethlehem of the king of the Jews and fearing a rival of his own worldly power, sent soldiers to kill all the male children of Bethlehem. His enemies seized this opportunity to denounce Zacharias to Herod, who had him pursued and put to death within the precinct of the Temple, at the very place the Mother of God abode for a witness to her virginity. As the Prophet's blood flowed within the sanctuary, it signified the withdrawing of the divine Presence. Priests came to take up his body and they buried him with his fathers. From that moment signs and prodigies occurred in the Temple, indicating that the rites of the Law would soon be abolished. No longer would the priests behold the angels of God, or have the grace of prophecy; no longer would they be able to deliver oracles or enlighten the people upon the dark places of holy Scripture, as they had been wont to do.'

**Holy Hieromartyr Athanasius of Brest-Litovsk (1649)**

'Saint Athanasius was born in the province of Minsk in 1596, the same year as the false Union of Brest-Litovsk was concluded between Rome and some Russian bishops. His father was a Lithuanian nobleman of modest means, but Athanasius acquired a breadth and depth of learning that were exceptional at that time. Besides modern and ancient languages and the writings of the holy Fathers, he was familiar with the works of Western philosophers and theologians.

'In 1627, after spending several years as a private tutor, he became a monk at the Monastery of Khutyn near Orsha in Little Russia. This monastery was independent of the Polish occupying forces and, by tradition, deeply committed to the



preservation of Orthodoxy, so that it was able to offer great encouragement to the Orthodox people in the face of Roman Catholic propaganda. Athanasius went on to follow his monastic path in other renowned monasteries, and was ordained priest. The Metropolitan of Kiev, Peter Moghila, gave him the task of restoring the Monastery of Kupyatitsk. In obedience to a divine revelation, Athanasius set out for Moscow, a long and dangerous journey through territory under Polish occupation, in order to ask for financial assistance for the restoration, and to acquaint the Tsar with the fate intended for the Orthodox Church in the lands to the south-west of Russia. He was successful in his quest and with the help of the Mother of God, the restoration works were begun. Two years later, Athanasius was appointed Abbot of the Monastery of St Symeon the Stylite in Brest-Litovsk. From then on, he was to be a resolute and tireless fighter against Roman proselytism, clothed in Orthodox rites and customs known as the *Unia*. For the next eight years, by prayer, preaching and through his writings, the Saint devoted all his strength to refuting the false Union, and to bringing back to the holy sheep-fold of Christ those who had strayed.

"The population of the occupied territories was brutally treated by the Polish soldiers and colonists, nor did the Jesuit missionaries, for their part, abstain from any measure that might serve to lead the peoples of Little Russia to accept their faith. In this situation, Saint Athanasius decided to petition the King of Poland, Vladislav IV, that the Orthodox be treated with more humanity. The King was moved by his request and issued a decree forbidding the abuses that had occurred, but his officials ignored it. The condition of the Orthodox in Warsaw was particularly bad. It was not unknown for the Poles and Uniates to set fire to Orthodox churches on feast days when they were full of the faithful, just as had happened in the time of the great Persecutions.

"Athanasius kept up the fight, aided and comforted by none but the Mother of God, and in 1643, following a new revelation, he again appealed for redress on behalf of the Orthodox to the Polish Council of State. He received a favourable hearing and the Orthodox were granted some legal protection. But certain Orthodox men of rank, fearing for their privileges, claimed that the Saint was mad and succeeded in having him deprived of his abbacy, deposed from the priesthood and sent to Kiev to answer before a church court.

"The humble Athanasius was completely exonerated and restored to his position, but he did not have peace for long, since persecution of the Orthodox soon began again. He drew up a petition intended for the King of Poland, but was arrested and thrown into prison before he was able to complete it. He was released after three years' detention but, in 1648, a persecution broke out that was more terrible than ever before. So bloody was it that the people of Little Russia rose up and demanded the departure of the Polish-Lithuanian army and the restoration of Russian territory to the Tsar. The Polish authorities immediately arrested the rebel leaders and prominent Orthodox dignitaries. Saint Athanasius was imprisoned, and endured physical and mental torments of all kinds at the hands of his gaolers and of the Roman Catholic authorities, but he never ceased to cry, 'Anathema to the Union!' After being tortured with red-hot coals, he was flayed and burnt alive. As he was still not dead, his executioners shot him.

"They threw his decapitated corpse into a pit, where it was found some time later incorrupt. In the years that followed, the relics of the holy Martyr worked many miracles." (*Synaxarion*)

Holy Martyrs Abda the bishop, Hormizd and Sunin of Persia (4th c)

Saint Abda lived in Persia during the reign of the Emperor Theodosius II and of the Persian king Yazgerd I; as bishop of the Christians there, he labored tirelessly to care for his own flock and bring the pagans to Christ. One day, full of zeal, he entered the temple at which the king made sacrifice, overturned the sacred fire and set the temple on fire. The enraged king forbade the worship of the Christian God, ordered the destruction of all the churches and monasteries, and arrested all of the clergy. Abda was brought before the king and ordered to rebuild the pagan temple; when he refused, he was cruelly and lengthily tortured until they gave up their souls to God. This was the beginning of a thirty-year period of terrible persecution for Christians in Persia. Of the many who perished for Christ during this time, St Benjamin is commemorated on October 13, and Sts Hormizd and Sunin today.

Saint Hormizd was the son of a Persian governor who became a Christian in his youth. For this, his father condemned him to labor as a naked camel-herder in the desert. Some time later, the King sent Hormizd a linen tunic, promising to restore him to favor if he would return to the religion of the Persians. The Saint tore up the tunic and returned it to the king, for which he was executed.

Saint Sunin was a high Persian official who turned to Christ and was rewarded with a crown of martyrdom.

## SEPTEMBER 6

† Commemoration of the Miracle of the Archangel Michael at Colossae (Chonne) (4th c.)

In Colossae in Phrygia there were a church and a holy spring dedicated to the Archangel Michael. Malicious pagans diverted the course of two rivers so that they would inundate the church. But the Archangel appeared, bringing with him an

earthquake that shook the whole area and opened a fissure into which the waters plunged, sparing the church. The place was thereafter called "Chonae" Greek for "funnels" instead of Colossae.

**Holy Prophet Zacharias and Righteous Elizabeth (1st c.), parents of St John the Forerunner.**

The story of the holy parents of the Forerunner is told in the first chapters of Luke's Gospel. Several of the Fathers say that Zacharias is the one who, the Lord said, was slain between the temple and the altar (Matthew 23:35); because he continued to call the Mary the Mother of God a virgin even after she bore Christ; and because his son had escaped the slaughter of the innocents ordered by Herod. St Elizabeth had hidden him in a cave in the desert; he remained in the wilderness from that time until he began to preach by the Jordan.

**St Maxim (Sandovich), martyr of Lemkos, Czechoslovakia (1914) (August 24 OC)**

St Maxim was born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1888. At this time all Orthodox Churches had been captured and subjected to the "Unia," by which, though keeping the Orthodox liturgical rites, they were united to the Roman Catholic Church. Many of the Carpatho-Russian people were ignorant of the change and what it meant; others were unhappy with it but, in their subject condition, saw no alternative. Maxim's farmer parents, at great personal sacrifice, obtained an education for him that enabled him to study for the priesthood at the Basilian seminary in Krakow. Here he discerned the un-Orthodox nature of the "Greek Catholic" training there and traveled to Russia, where he became a novice at the Great Lavra of Pochaev and met Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky), who encouraged him in his quest for Orthodoxy. (Archbishop Anthony, after the Russian Revolution, became the first Metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad). He entered seminary in Russia in 1905 and was ordained to the Priesthood in 1911. Metropolitan Anthony, knowing the hardships and persecutions that awaited any Orthodox priest in Austro-Hungary, offered to find Maxim a parish in Russia. But Maxim was already aware of the hunger for Orthodoxy among many of the Carpatho-Russian people; several people from his village had travelled to America and while there had attended Orthodox Churches and confessed to Orthodox priests. They begged him to return to his country and establish an Orthodox parish there.

When he returned to his native village of Zhdynia, the Polish authorities, seeing him in the rassa, beard and uncut hair of an Orthodox priest, mocked him, saying "Look, Saint Nicholas has come to the Carpathians!" But the people of nearby Hrab sent a delegation asking him to set up an Orthodox parish in their village. This he did, setting up a house-church in the residence that the people gave him. Almost immediately, he and his people began to be harassed and persecuted, first at the instigation of "Greek Catholic" priests, then of the government. His rectory/church was closed, and he and several of his parishioners were repeatedly jailed, sometimes on trumped-up charges of sedition. (The Carpatho-Russian people were always suspected of pro-Russian political sympathies by the Austrian and Polish authorities).

Despite these persecutions, through Fr Maxim's labors a wave of desire for Orthodoxy spread through the region, with many Carpatho-Russians openly identifying themselves as Orthodox. The government issued orders to regional mayors to forbid those who had identified themselves as Orthodox to gather and, in 1913, appointed a special commissioner whose task was to force the people to return to Catholicism.

In 1914, war broke out between Russia and Austro-Hungary. Despite lack of any evidence that Fr Maxim had engaged in pro-Russian political activity — he once said "My only politics is the Gospel" — he was arrested and executed on September 6 by the Papal calendar, August 24 by the Church Calendar. He was denied any form of Church burial, and his father buried him with his own hands.

Following the First World War, Orthodoxy became legal in the new Polish Republic, and a monument was placed at Fr Maxim's grave in his home town of Zhdynia. In 1994, the Orthodox Church of Poland officially glorified St Maxim.

## SEPTEMBER 7

**Forefeast of the Nativity of the Theotokos**

**† Martyr Sozon of Cilicia (208/304)**

He began life as a pagan shepherd in Lycaonia. Coming to faith in Christ, he was baptized and received the name Sozon ("Save"). Thereafter he took every opportunity to proclaim the Gospel to his countrymen and to urge them to give up their idols. Entering a temple of Artemis in Cilicia, he cut off its golden hand, broke it into pieces, and distributed the gold to the poor. When he learned that because of this some were being punished unjustly for theft, he gave himself up to the governor Maximian. He was beaten to death with rods; by some accounts in 288, by others in 304.

**Holy Apostles Evodius and Onesiphorus of the Seventy**

St Evodius (or Evodius) is mentioned by St Ignatius of Antioch. He was a disciple of the Apostle Peter and succeeded him as Bishop of Antioch. It is said that the name "Christians" for members of the Church was given by Evodius. He was martyred during a visit by the Emperor Vespasian to Antioch. St Onesiphorus is mentioned by the Apostle Paul in his second epistle to St Timothy, where he calls Onesiphorus a friend and helper. He was a bishop in Colophon in Asia Minor, where he met

martyrdom for Christ.

Holy Martyr Eupseychius of Caesarea (2nd c.)

He was the son of a wealthy pagan senator in Caesarea of Cappadocia. When his father died, he gave his inheritance to the poor, proclaiming the Kingdom of God while he did so. For this he was arrested by Sapricius, Governor of Cappadocia, and put in prison. He persuaded his jailers to release him for awhile, and set about giving away the remainder of his worldly goods, first to his accusers and persecutors, then to the poor. When all his wealth was gone, he voluntarily returned to prison. He was viciously scourged several times, then beheaded. At his martyrdom, it is said that milk instead of blood flowed from his body.

Our Holy Father John, Archbishop of Novgorod (1185)

"He was first a married priest and then, from 1163, bishop in Novgorod, building seven churches during his lifetime. He had a vision of the holy Mother of God and a rare power over demons, making them obey him, and he once miraculously preserved Novgorod from an attack by seventy-two princes. He suffered from diabolical temptations, but overcame them all by the power of the Cross and by prayer. Retiring to a monastery in old age, he received the Great Habit and entered peacefully into rest in the Lord on September 7th, 1185." (*Prologue*)

## SEPTEMBER 8

† The Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos

The Theotokos was born to aged and barren parents, Joachim and Anna. (For their story, see tomorrow's listing). She was born about the year 16 or 17 before the birth of her Son, the Christ.

New Martyr Athanasius of Thessalonika (1774)

He was born to a distinguished and pious Christian family in Thessalonika. After acquiring an unusually good education he spent a few years in Constantinople, then returned to his native city. He spoke both Turkish and Arabic well, and often conversed with Muslims. Once, while speaking with an *emir*, Athanasius pronounced the Muslim confession of faith to illustrate a point. The emir, seeing an opportunity, immediately reported Athanasius to the Islamic judge, claiming that he had converted to Islam. The judge found no merit in the case and would have dismissed Athanasius; but the emir and other officials were insistent, and the judge pressured Athanasius to convert. When Athanasius answered that he knew no truth but that of Christ, he was thrown in prison. When he appeared before the judge several days later, he was still firm in his confession, and was sentenced to death. He was hanged outside the city in 1774, at the age of twenty-five.

Our Venerable Father Serapion of Pskov (1481)

He was born in (what is now) Lithuania, but entered monastic life in the Pskov district. His spiritual father was St Euphrosynus (May 15), under whose care he lived for more than fifty-five years. He became known for his exceptional humility and asceticism. He tried never to be idle, giving any free moment to prayer and reading of Scripture. He emphasized the importance of the common prayer of the Church, saying that reciting the entire Twelve Psalm rule in one's cell was not worth one *Kyrie Eleison* chanted by the brethren assembled together in church. His knowledge of Lithuanian and Finnish allowed him to strengthen the faith among the peoples of those lands. When he died, at the age of ninety, his clothing was so threadbare that no one wanted it. Soon after his repose, a blind man recovered his sight at St Serapion's tomb, which has been the site of many miracles ever since.

## SEPTEMBER 9

† Holy Ancestors of God Joachim and Anna

St Joachim was of the tribe of Judah and a descendant of King David. St Anna was of the tribe of Levi, the daughter of a priest named Matthan. Matthan's three daughters were Mary, Zoia and Anna. Mary became the mother of Salome the Myrrhbearer; Zoia bore Elizabeth, mother of St John the Baptist; and Anna married Joachim in Nazareth. Joachim and Anna, to their great sorrow, were barren for fifty years. They lived prayerfully and kept only a third of their income for themselves, giving a third to the poor and a third to the Temple. Once when they had come to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice at the Temple, Joachim was publicly scorned by the High Priest Issachar for his childlessness. Joachim and Anna, greatly grieved, prayed fervently that God would grant them the miracle that he had wrought for Abraham and Sarah, and give them a child in their old age. Once, as each was praying separately in a secluded place, angels appeared to each of them and revealed to them that they would be given a blessed daughter, 'by whom all nations will be blessed, and through whom will come the salvation of the world.' They both rushed home to tell one another the joyous news, and embraced when they met. (This is the moment depicted in their icon.) Anna conceived and gave birth to the Most Holy Theotokos. Both reposed in peace, not long after they had sent her to live in the Temple.

Commemoration of the Third Ecumenical Council (431)

The Council, called by the Emperor Theodosius the Younger, met in Ephesus. The two hundred fathers gathered there condemned the teaching of Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, who would not call the holy Virgin Mary *Theotokos* (God-bearer) but only *Christotokos* (Christ-bearer). The holy fathers of the Council clearly affirmed that the Virgin Mary is, and is to be called, Mother of God. They also confirmed the teaching of the first two Councils and decreed that the Nicene Creed may not be altered (as it later was by the Western church).

#### † Holy Martyr Severian of Sebaste (320)

He was a prominent citizen of Sebaste during the reign of Licinius. When the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (March 9) were in prison, he encouraged and comforted them. For this, and for his Christian example which had converted many pagans in the region, the Provincial Governor Lysias ordered his arrest. But before the soldiers could find him, he presented himself before the Governor and openly proclaimed his faith. For this he was subjected to many days of horrible tortures, during which he constantly exhorted the believers who followed him to stand firm in their confession of Christ. After astonishing endurance of his torments, he gave up his spirit to God.

At the Saint's burial, the husband of one of his servants was miraculously raised from the dead, living for another fifteen years. The Christians could not decide where to bury Severian, so they wove a crown of flowers and laid it on his body to await a sign from heaven. An eagle took up the crown and dropped it in a nearby forest. The Christians buried the Martyr where the crown fell; his tomb became a fount of miracles, and the man who had been raised from the dead tended it for the rest of his life.

#### Our Holy Father Ciaran of Clonmacnoise (549)

Born to the family of a cartwright in Ireland, he entered monastic life when he was very young at the Monastery of Clonard, where he became a disciple of St Finnian (December 12). He became one of the 'Twelve Apostles of Ireland', all of them disciples of St Finnian. Ciaran founded the great monastery of Clonmacnoise (pronounced *clon-mac-neesh*) on the Sha River, which became one of Ireland's great monasteries. Once, during a great famine, He distributed all of the monastery's food to the people, entrusting his monks' survival, and his own, to providence. Saint Ciaran reposed in peace, aged only thirty-three, in 459.

### SEPTEMBER 10

#### Martyrs Menodora, Metrodora, and Nymphodora at Nicomedia (305-311)

They were three sisters, raised in the Christian faith in Bithynia. Together they withdrew from the world and lived together in virginity on a lonely mountain, devoting themselves to prayer, fasting and labor. Though they wished only to live unknown to the world, their wonderworking gifts were discovered, and many people began to come to them for healing of ailments. In this way word of them reached the governor Fronton, who had them arrested and brought before him. Struck by their beauty (which had only increased despite their fasting and hard labor), the governor tried to flatter them, promising that he would send them to the Emperor to be given in marriage to noblemen. When he saw that this had no effect, the governor threw the sisters into prison. First he had Menodora tortured to death, then brought her two sisters to view her mutilated body, commanding them to deny Christ or meet the same fate. When they refused, they were subjected to the same fate. Christians recovered and buried the bodies of the three holy martyrs.

### SEPTEMBER 11

#### Our Holy Mother Theodora of Alexandria (490)

While a young married woman, she committed adultery with another man. Seized by remorse, she fled her husband's house, dressed herself as a man, renamed herself Theodore, and entered a men's monastery, pretending to be a eunuch. "Theodore"'s fasts, prayers, vigils and tears amazed "his" brethren. Her secret was only discovered after her death. She had spent nine full years devoting her life to repentance for one sin. During her life she showed herself to be a wonderworker, taming wild beasts and healing sicknesses. Her husband came to her funeral, then lived until his death in the cell of his former wife.

#### St Euphrosynos the Cook of Alexandria (9th c.)

His icon is found in countless Orthodox kitchens. A simple and holy man, when he entered monastic life in Alexandria he was judged unfit for any service more demanding than kitchen work. There he labored without complaint, looked down upon by most of the other monks. One night the abbot dreamed that he was in Paradise, and there met Euphrosynos, who gave him a branch that bore three fragrant apples. Awakened, the abbot found the same apples on his pillow. He hurried to find Euphrosynos and asked him, "Where were you last night, brother?" Euphrosynos only replied, "Where were you, Father?" The abbot gathered the monks and told them the wonderful story, by which they all realized the cook's holiness. But Euphrosynos, unwilling to endure the praise of men, fled the monastery for the desert.



## St Paphnutius the Confessor (4th c.)

"A bishop of the Egyptian Thebaid, he suffered greatly for the Orthodox faith: heretics put out one of his eyes and broke his left leg. He took part in the First Ecumenical Council, refuting the Arian heresy with great power. The Emperor Constantine valued him greatly and often kissed him on the missing eye, lost for the truth of Orthodoxy. At the council, he stood in opposition to the western representatives, who proposed that secular priests be completely forbidden to marry. He was chaste throughout the whole of his life." (*Prologue*)

## Canonization of St Xenia of St Petersburg (1978)

She is commemorated on January 24.

## SEPTEMBER 12

## Leavetaking of the Nativity of the Theotokos

## Hieromartyr Autonomus, bishop of Italy (313)

He fled from Italy to Bithynia during Diocletian's persecutions. In Bithynia he converted so many pagans to faith in Christ that those whose hearts remained hard rose up against him and, while he was celebrating the Divine Liturgy in the Church of the Archangel Michael, slew him at the altar, killing many other worshipers with him. Two hundred years after his death, he appeared to a soldier named John, who unearthed his relics and found them to be completely incorrupt.

## Our Holy Father Athanasius the Elder of Vysotsk (early 15th c.), and his disciple Athanasius the Younger (1395)

He was reared in piety by his father, a priest in Novgorod. One day, hearing the words of the Gospel, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me*, he renounced the world and entered the Monastery of St Sergius of Radonezh. He became St Sergius' disciple and, after a few years, became known for his virtue and his knowledge of Scripture. In 1374, with the blessing of his spiritual father, he founded the Monastery of Vysotsk, becoming its first abbot. After heading the monastery for fourteen years, he traveled to Kiev and then, in 1401, to the Monastery of the Stoudion in Constantinople. There he devoted himself to translating books from Greek to Slavonic, sending his translations back to his monastery in Russia. It was he who translated the Jerusalem Typikon and several collections of the writings of the Fathers of the Church, immeasurably enriching the life of the Church in Russia. He reposed in peace in Constantinople.

His disciple Athanasius the Younger was made Abbot of Vysotsk on the elder's departure for Constantinople, and served as Abbot for eight years, reposing in peace in 1395. He was called 'perfect in fasting, strong in self-restraint, zealous in prayer, patient in privations and tribulations.' The *Synaxarion* says that "He taught his monks to keep careful watch on every movement of the heart so as to drive away every thought displeasing to God."

## SEPTEMBER 13

## Forefeast of the Exaltation of the Cross

## Commemoration of the Founding of the Church of the Resurrection (Holy Sepulchre) at Jerusalem (335)

The Church is located on Golgotha, where our Lord was crucified and buried. The true Cross and the place of the Resurrection were covered over by those hostile to Christ and His Apostles, and in the reign of Hadrian a temple to Aphrodite was built over the holy sites. St Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, personally commanded and oversaw the excavations that restored the site and recovered the Cross itself. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was begun at the impress Helena's command, but she reposed before it could be completed. The Church was completed by Constantine and consecrated on this date in 335. Makarios archbishop of Jerusalem, presided at the consecration and also exalted the precious Cross (September 14). It is at this church that the miracle of the Holy Fire occurs every Pascha.

## Holy Hieromartyr Cornelius the Centurion (1st c.)

This is the Cornelius who received St Peter into his household in Caesarea (Acts ch.10). He was then instructed in the Faith and baptised by St Peter, though he had been a pagan and a Gentile: a great turning point in the growth of the Church, for before this time many (including St Peter) had believed that the Church was meant only for the Jews. Tradition holds that St Cornelius later became a bishop and died a martyr.

## Holy Great Martyr Ketevan, Queen of Georgia (1624)

In the seventeenth century, the Kingdom of Georgia was cruelly pressed by the Ottoman Empire on one side and Persia, under Shah Abbas the Great, on the other. King Theimuraz was taken captive by the Persians during an invasion and held captive in the fortress of Shiraz until, after many tortures, he was strangled.

The King's mother, Queen Ketevan, travelled to the Persian court at Shiraz along with her grandsons Levan and Alexander, to plead with the Shah to spare the Kingdom. The Shah agreed, but the three were kept as hostages, where all were cruelly tortured.

Queen Ketevan endured ten years of captivity, throughout which the Shah attempted to convert her to Islam, first by

persuasion and threats, then by torture. The Queen refused every effort to drive her into apostasy, and before each new torture would make the sign of the Cross and say 'In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' At the end a brazier of burning coals was fixed to her head and, in the midst of her extreme torment, she was strangled with a bow string on September 13 1624. After her glorious martyrdom a divine light surrounded her tomb.

#### SEPTEMBER 14

##### † The Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross

"Saint Helen, the mother of Saint Constantine the Great, when she was already advanced in years, undertook, in her great piety, the hardships of a journey to Jerusalem in search of the Cross, about the year 325. A temple to Aphrodite had been raised up by the Emperor Hadrian upon Golgotha, to defile and cover with oblivion the place where the saving Passion had been suffered. The venerable Helen had the statue of Aphrodite destroyed, and the earth removed, revealing the Tomb of our Lord, and three crosses. Of these, it was believed that one must be that of our Lord, the other two of the thieves crucified with Him; but Saint Helen was at a loss which one might be the Wood of our salvation. At the inspiration of Saint Macarius, Archbishop of Jerusalem, a lady of Jerusalem, who was already at the point of death from a certain disease, was brought to touch the crosses, and as soon as she came near to the Cross of our Lord, she was made perfectly whole. Consequently, the precious Cross was lifted on high by Archbishop Macarius of Jerusalem; as he stood on the ambo, and when the people beheld it, they cried out, "Lord, have mercy." It should be noted that after its discovery, a portion of the venerable Cross was taken to Constantinople as a blessing. The rest was left in Jerusalem in the magnificent church built by Saint Helen, until the year 614. At that time, the Persians plundered Palestine and took the Cross to their own country (See Jan. 22, Saint Anastasius the Persian). Later, in the year 628, Emperor Heraclius set out on a military campaign, retrieved the Cross and after bringing it to Constantinople, himself escorted it back to Jerusalem, where he restored it to its place." (*Great Homilies*)

A fast is kept today, whatever the day of the week.

##### Repose of St John Chrysostom (407)

##### St Placilla the Empress (385 or 386)

She was the wife of the Emperor Theodosius the Great, and the mother of two Emperors, Arcadius and Honorius. Despite her lofty station, she devoted herself to visiting the poor and to caring personally for the sick. She often worked in the kitchens of various hospices in Constantinople, taking on tasks unexpected of anyone of patrician rank, let alone the Empress herself. To fulfil these missions, she often traveled unescorted through the poorest parts of the City. When others tried to caution or dissuade her, she answered that this was her way of giving thanks for all that God had given her. "Throughout her life, Saint Placilla served God in chastity, meekness, charity and prayer, and departed in peace to eternal life in 386 (or 385), having brought to those who encountered her a pledge of the Resurrection and of endless joy." (*Synaxarion*)

##### Holy New Martyr Macarius of Thessalonica (1527)

"A disciple of Patriarch Niphon at the time that the latter was labouring in the asceticism of silence at Vatopedi, Macarius longed for martyrdom for the sake of Christ, and begged St Niphon's blessing to seek it. The discerning Patriarch, perceiving that this was God's will, blessed him for the way of martyrdom. Macarius went to Salonica and, in the midst of a crowd of Turks, began to speak of Christ as the one, true God. The Turks seized him and threw him into prison. When he was brought to trial, Macarius cried out to the Turks: 'Oh, that you would come to know the truth and be baptised in the name of Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit!' The Turks beheaded him in 1527. At that moment, Niphon saw this in his spirit at Vatopedi, and told a monk of Macarius's death by martyrdom, saying: 'Know, my child, that your brother Macarius has today died a martyr, and is borne to heaven, triumphing and rejoicing in the Lord. May we be worthy of blessing by his prayers!' (From the Athonite Patrology)." (*Prologue*)

#### SEPTEMBER 15

##### Great Martyr Nicetas the Goth (372)

He was a Goth of noble birth among his people, a disciple of Bishop Theophilus of the Goths, who took part in the First Ecumenical Council. When he confronted Athanaric, the pagan ruler of the Goths, for his persecution of Christians and for his unbelief, Nicetas was cruelly tortured and finally burned to death. Though he died in the flames, his body was brought forth unharmed. His relics were taken by his friend Marianus to Mopsuestia in Cilicia, where a church dedicated to the Saint was built.

##### Holy Martyr Porphyrius (361).

"An actor, he first mocked at Christians before Julian the Apostate. On one occasion, when he was mimicking the Christian mystery of Baptism, he was dipped into the water, pronouncing the words: 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.'"

the Holy Spirit.' When he emerged from the water, he cried out: 'Now I am a Christian!' Everyone thought that this was in jest, as always, but he held firm to it, stopped mocking Christians and finally suffered for Christ. He was beheaded in 361, and entered into the Kingdom of Christ." (*Prologue*)

*We rightly condemn worship that is purely external; but the life of St Porphyrius reminds us in a striking way that the 'externals' of the Faith have a power that can work to convert the heart of man. St Porphyrius used the words of Holy Baptism not only carelessly but mockingly, yet by God's grace he emerged from the waters truly renewed into Christ.*

## SEPTEMBER 16

### † Great-Martyr Euphemia the All-praised, of Chalcedon (304)

She was born in Chalcedon to noble Christian parents. When Priscus, the local Proconsul, celebrated a public sacrifice to Ares, forty-nine Christians including Euphemia hid themselves to avoid idolatry. Their absence was noticed, and they were found and brought before Priscus. After torturing all of them for eleven days, on the twelfth day he singled out Euphemia because of her beauty and began to flatter her, hoping in this way to draw her away from the Faith. When his efforts proved useless, he ordered her to be more savagely tortured than any of her fellow believers. She was miraculously preserved intact through many tortures, finally giving her soul into God's hands when she was thrown to wild beasts. Her devout parents retrieved and buried her body. Her relics are preserved in the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

The miracle wrought by her holy relics at the Council of Chalcedon is commemorated on July 11.

### Holy Hieromartyr Cyprian of Carthage (258)

He was born to wealthy and noble parents in Carthage (north Africa), and became a prominent lawyer in that city. Around the year 246 he embraced the Christian faith and was baptized by the priest Caecilianus. Immediately he gave all his goods to the poor and retired to a quiet place in the country to devote himself to prayer and study of Christian writings. In 248 or 249 he was elected Bishop of Carthage by the insistence of the people, though some priests opposed the consecration of such a new Christian.

Soon after his election, the Emperor Decius began a terrible persecution of Christians, during which Cyprian, in hiding, upheld his flock by letters. During this time many Christians gave in to fear of death and either sacrificed to the idols or signed statements that they had done so. When the persecution ended, the problem arose of how to treat the apostates who wished to be received back into the Church. Rigorist groups such as the Novatians and Montanists held that these *lapsi* had removed themselves from all hope of salvation and could never re-enter the Church. Cyprian rejected this view (as well as the position of some who would immediately reconcile the apostates); he established the position, still standard in the Church, that apostates could be restored after confession and long penance. His position led to a schism in the Church at Carthage when Cyprian's opponents set up Maximus the Montanist as a rival Bishop. The schism was only ended by a plague that swept the Empire and the city of Carthage in 253-254, together with a renewed persecution of Christians. Saint Cyprian's tireless care for the suffering during this time won most of the schismatics back to his side. When peace returned, Cyprian called a series of Councils in Carthage to resolve the conflicts that had troubled the Church. He upheld the African (and Eastern) churches' practice of reconciling heretics to the Church by Baptism rather than by laying on of hands, as was done in Rome; though Cyprian did not seek to impose this practice on other churches, Rome was not so tolerant and broke with the African church until the death of Pope Stephen.

In 256, yet another persecution broke out under the Emperor Valerian. Cyprian was arrested and brought before the Proconsul of the region. He refused to defend himself, and when told that he was to be executed, said only *Deo Gratias!* (Thanks be to God!). At his execution the holy bishop ordered that twenty-five gold pieces be given to the executioner, and put on the blindfold with his own hands.

*Note: St Cyprian is missing on this date from traditional martyrologies because he was once confused with St Cyprian of Antioch (October 2). Today is the date of his martyrdom and the date of his commemoration on the Latin calendar.*

### St Ninian, Enlightener of Scotland (432)

One of the great missionaries and early Saints of the British Isles, he was born in Britain around the year 360. Though Britain was still mostly pagan, Ninian was born of Christian parents. He traveled to Rome as a young man, and spent several years there engaged in study and ascetic struggle. He was ordained in Rome and sent back as a missionary to Britain around the year 400. On the way he probably met St Martin of Tours; many of the churches he founded, including his cathedral in Whithorn, were named in honor of St Martin. He established several monasteries, ministered to his Christian Briton countrymen and converted many more Britons to the Faith. He also converted many of the fierce Picts, inhabitants of today's Scotland, to faith in Christ. He reposed in peace in Whithorn in 432.

### Our Holy Father Dorotheos the Solitary of Egypt (4th c.)

He was one of the great company of Egyptian desert fathers of the fourth century. He lived alone in a cell in the Thebaid for

sixty years, devoting himself to prayer, asceticism and renowned love of labor. He spent his days building cells for new monks, his nights making plaited mats, all the while immersed in prayer and psalmody.

#### SEPTEMBER 17

##### Martyrs Sophia and her three daughters Faith, Hope and Love, at Rome (137)

Sophia was a widow in Rome in the time of the Emperor Hadrian, and raised her three daughters in the Faith. When the four of them were brought before the persecutors, Faith was twelve years old, Hope was ten, and Love was nine. Ordered to make sacrifice to the goddess Artemis, all of them humbly refused. All three daughters were tortured, then executed, before their mother's eyes. Sophia buried their bodies and mourned at their grave for three days and nights, then fell asleep in peace. For her steadfastness and solidarity with her daughters' sufferings she is counted as a martyr along with them. *Sophia* means "wisdom" in Greek; the three daughters' names in Greek are *Pistis*, *Elpis*, and *Agape*; in Russian, *Vera*, *Nadezhda*, and *Lyubov*. They are represented on many icons.

##### Our Holy Father Lambert, Bishop of Maastricht (705)

He was born to a noble family in Maastricht (in modern-day Belgium). When his spiritual father Bishop Theodard was killed in 671, St Lambert was elected Bishop of Maastricht despite his youth. He was loved by his flock for his holiness, ascetic labors and almsgiving, but was driven from his see in 675 after his patron King Childeric II was assassinated. He withdrew to the Monastery of Stavelot where he lived for seven years as one of the brethren, claiming no privileges despite his office. Once, getting up to pray during the night, he accidentally disturbed the monastic silence. The Abbot called out for whoever was responsible to do penance by standing barefoot in the snow before a cross outside the monastery church. In the morning the Abbot was dismayed to see the Bishop standing barefoot, covered with snow, before the cross, his face shining. The Abbot sought to apologize, but Lambert replied that he was honored to serve God like the Apostles, in cold and nakedness.

When King Pepin of Herstal took power in 681, he restored Lambert to his see, despite the Saint's desire to remain in obscurity. The holy bishop renewed his pastoral labors with vigor, visiting the most distant parishes and preaching the Gospel to the pagans who still inhabited the area, despite danger and threats. But when King Pepin put away his wife and replaced her with his concubine Alpais, St Lambert was the only Bishop who dared to rebuke him. For this he incurred the wrath of Alpais, who ordered his death. His assassins carried out their evil commission, even though they found a cross shining above the humble dwelling where he was staying.

Saint Lambert is one of the best-loved Saints of Belgium, where many parish churches are dedicated to him.

#### SEPTEMBER 18

##### St Eumenius, bishop of Gortyna (7th c.)

"He gave himself to Christ with his whole heart from his youth, freeing himself from two heavy burdens: the burden of riches and the burden of the flesh. He freed himself from the first by giving away all his goods to the poor and needy, and from the latter by strict fasting. He thus healed himself and was able to heal others. Passionless and filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, Eumenius shone with a radiance that could not be hidden, as it is written: 'A city set on a hill cannot be hid' (Matt. 5:14), and so holy Eumenius could not be hidden from the world. Seeing him, the people chose him as their bishop in Gortyna. As a bishop, he governed Christ's flock as a good shepherd. He was a father to the poor, riches to the needy, consolation to the sad, healing to the sick and a marvellous wonder-worker. He worked many miracles by his powers: he killed a poisonous snake, drove out demons, healed many of the sick, and did this not only in his home city but in Rome and in the Thebaid. In the Thebaid, he brought rain from God in a time of drought, and there finally finished his earthly course and entered into the eternal presence of his Lord. He lived and worked in the seventh century." (*Prologue*)

##### St Ariadne of Phrygia (2nd c.)

She lived during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian in the town of Promisea in Phrygia. Though a Christian, she was the slave of a pagan nobleman named Tertullus. To celebrate his son's birthday, Tertullus ordered his entire household to come to a pagan temple and make sacrifice to the idols; but Ariadne stayed home, praying to the only true God. This infuriated Tertullus, who beat her, threw her in prison, then drove her from his house. He quickly changed his mind and sent his servants to bring her back. When Ariadne saw her persecutors drawing near, she knelt by a large rock and prayed. The rock split open and hid her. At this point, the *Synaxarion* says that Angels bearing spears appeared around the rock and drove her pursuers away. The *Prologue* says that the servants, unable to find Ariadne, quarrelled among themselves, came to blows, and died at one another's hands.

#### SEPTEMBER 19

##### Martyrs Trophimus, Sabbatius, and Dorymedon of Synnada (278)



Saints Trophimus and Sabbatius came to Antioch during a great festival of Apollo and Daphne. Sorrowing for the blindness of the people they presented themselves to Atticus, the governor, and announced that they were Christians. Sabbatius was tortured so cruelly that he died in his sufferings; Trophimus was sent to Synnada, where he in turn was tortured, then imprisoned barely alive. An official of that city, Dorymedon, was moved to pity and came to the prison to care for Trophimus. (The *Great Horologion* says that he was still a pagan at the time, the Prologue that he was a secret Christian). When a pagan festival came, Dorymedon refused to worship the idols and proclaimed himself a Christian. He and Trophimus together were tortured, thrown to wild beasts (who would not touch them), and finally beheaded.

#### Holy Martyr Zosimas the Hermit of Cilicia (4th c.)

Dometian, a prince and a fierce persecutor of Christians, was hunting in the mountains when he came upon an old man surrounded by wild beasts, who were as gentle and tame as lambs in his presence. When asked who he was, the old man answered that he was Zosimas, a Christian who had left the persecutors in the city to live among the beasts instead. Dometian, hearing that Zosimas was a Christian, ordered him seized and bound, and subjected him to many tortures. When the holy man was wounded and beaten all over, the prince tied a rock around his neck and hanged him from a tree, mocking him with the words 'Command a wild beast to come, then we will all believe!' Zosimas prayed, and at once a large lion appeared, came up to Zosimas, and took the weight of the rock on its head to ease the martyr's sufferings. The terrified prince freed Zosimas, who died of his wounds not long afterward.

#### SEPTEMBER 20

#### † Great Martyr Eustathius (Eustace) Placidus, with his family (118)

Before baptism he was a renowned military commander under Trajan. While hunting in the woods, he met a great stag with a shining Cross between his antlers. Through the stag, the Lord spoke to Placidus (his pagan name) and told him to find a priest and be baptized into Christ. Returning home, he found that his wife Tatiana had also had a vision in which she was told to become a Christian. They were baptized, Placidus receiving the name Eustathius, and Tatiana the name Theopiste; their two sons were baptized with them. Eustathius and his family were almost immediately subjected to a series of grievous trials, in which all were separated from one another. After years of hardship they were re-united, and returned to Rome with honor when the Emperor sought out Eustathius to command his army once again. But when the Emperor Hadrian (who had succeeded Trajan) commanded them to worship the idols, all of them refused. They were put together into a large bronze ox which was heated white-hot in a fire. When their bodies were removed, they were found to be dead but intact. The *Prologue* concludes, 'Thus this glorious general gave to Caesar that which is Caesar's, and to God that which is God's, and entered into the eternal Kingdom of Christ our God.'

#### Holy Martyrs Hypatius and Andrew, Confessors of the Holy Icons (8th c.)

They were friends from childhood, fellow-strugglers for holiness. Their godly way of life attracted the attention of the Bishop of Ephesus, who made Hypatius a bishop and Andrew a deacon and itinerant preacher. During the reign of Leo the Isaurian (714-41) they were both imprisoned for confessing the Orthodox faith and defending the veneration of the holy icons. They were subjected to various tortures, including having icons set afire on their heads in mockery of their faithfulness. They were executed near Constantinople and their bodies thrown to the dogs.

#### Ss Anastasius, Theodore, Euprepus and Anastasius the Younger, confessors and disciples of St Maximos the Confessor (7th c.)

These saints were disciples of St Maximos the Confessor (January 21) and suffered with him for their condemnation of the Monothelite doctrine promoted by the Emperor Constans II. Anastasius the elder (who had been the Papal representative to Constantinople) and Anastasius the younger were present at the Lateran Council called by St Martin, Pope of Rome (April 13), which condemned the Monothelite heresy. For this the Pope himself, and the two confessors named Anastasius, were seized by the Emperor. Along with St Maximos, the two endured many tortures; when St Maximos had his right hand cut off and his tongue cut out, Anastasius the elder suffered the same punishment. They, along with their fellow-disciples Euprepus and Theodore and St Maximos himself, were sent into exile to Lazica in the Caucasus, where all of them died. Euprepus died after one year; Saint Maximos after three years; Anastasius the younger a few days before St Maximos; Anastasius the elder after seven years of exile; and Theodore after twenty years. All remained steadfast until the end, and all are proclaimed as Confessors of the Faith.

#### SEPTEMBER 21

#### Leavetaking of the Exaltation of the Cross

#### Holy Prophet Jonas (Jonah) (9th c. BC)

His story is told in the Old Testament book that bears his name. He is counted as one of the twelve 'minor prophets.'

According to one tradition recorded in the *Synaxaris*, he was the son of the widow of Zarephath, resurrected by the holy

Elias (July 20).

The song of Jonah, *I called to the Lord out of my distress* (Jonah 2:2-9) is the Sixth Biblical Ode of the Matins canon, and forms the basis of countless troparia, many of which meditate upon the Jonah's time in the belly of the sea-monster as a type of Christ's sojourn in the tomb. The Book of Jonah is read in its entirety on Holy Saturday.

The Prophet Jonah is commemorated tomorrow, September 22, on the Slavic calendar.

#### Apostle Quadratus (Codratus) of the Seventy (130)

He was one of the Seventy appointed by Christ Himself. After Christ's Ascension, Quadratus preached the Gospel in Athens, then served as a bishop in Athens, then in Magnesia. He was stoned by the pagans, then imprisoned and starved to death in prison. It is said that he wrote a defense of the Christian faith which caused the Emperor Hadrian to decree that Christians were not to be persecuted without special cause. He was buried in Magnesia.

#### Our Venerable Father Joseph of Zaonikiev Monastery (1612)

He was a peasant named Hilarion in the district of Vologda, and lived a simple, laboring life until he began to lose his sight. Not despairing, Hilarion went to all the churches nearby and asked that services of intercession be offered for him. One day, during the Divine Liturgy, Hilarion beheld a man in white clothing who told him that his name was Cosmas, blessed him, and told him that he would soon be healed. The next day Hilarion was going to church again and the Holy Unmercenary Cosmas and Damian appeared to him along with an icon of the Mother of God. A voice from the icon said that the people must cleanse the place where he stood and erect a cross there. Upon venerating the icon, Hilarion was instantly and completely healed. Returning to his village, he joyfully told what had happened. The villagers cleansed the place, as commanded in Hilarion's vision, set up a cross, and built a chapel to house the icon, which began to work many miracles. When the bishop learned of these events, he determined to found a monastery on that spot, and made Hilarion the first monk, giving him the name of Joseph. Saint Joseph spent the next thirty years there in prayer and great asceticism: he would spend the winter nights without sleep, standing in prayer before the miraculous icon of the Theotokos. He reposed in peace and was buried in the chapel that he and his fellow-villagers had built years before.

#### Finding of the Relics of St Dimitri of Rostov (1752)

St Dimitri is commemorated October 28.

#### SEPTEMBER 22

#### Hieromartyr Phocas, Bishop of Sinope (102)

He was a zealous, wise and wonder-working bishop in his birthplace, Sinope, which lies on the southern shore of the Black Sea. For bringing many idolators to faith in Christ, he was hated by the pagans. He was arrested by the governor Africanus, subjected to various tortures, and finally scalded to death in a bath-house. He contested for the Faith during the reign of the Emperor Trajan.

#### Venerable Cosmas, desert-dweller of Zographou, Mt Athos (1323)

"Saint Cosmas came from Bulgaria where his devout parents provided him with a good education in Slavonic and Greek. They wanted him to marry but he was drawn by the love of Christ and, unknown to them, made his way to the Holy Mountain of Athos to become a monk at the Bulgarian monastery of Zographou. On the feast of the Annunciation at the Monastery of Vatopedi, he saw a woman among those serving in the Church and in the refectory, and he was grieved at first to observe this breach of the monastic rule, but overjoyed when he realized that it was the Mother of God who had appeared to him in this way.

"He was clothed in the holy angelic Habit and, after some time, was ordained priest. One day, as he was praying before the icon of the Mother of God, asking her with tears how to achieve his salvation, he heard a voice saying, 'Let my servant withdraw to the desert outside the monastery.' He was obedient to the will of God and, with the blessing of his Abbot, lived in silence from then on. Some years later, he was found worthy of the grace of discernment of thoughts and of beholding things happening elsewhere, as well as of other spiritual gifts. In the course of many years, he was the spiritual helper of a great number of monks. At the end of his life, Christ appeared to him saying that he would shortly have a great trial to endure from the Devil. Indeed, the prince of demons made his appearance next day with a host of his servants bemoaning and bemoaning their inability to annihilate their great enemy Cosmas, who had held them in check for so long and gained possession, by his virtue, of the throne in Heaven that had once been Lucifer's. Taking a heavy stick, the demon beat the Saint so violently that he left him half-dead. As God allowed, Saint Cosmas died in peace two days later, on 22 September 1323. When the fathers came from the monastery to bury him, the wild animals gathered round. They kept silent until the end of the service, but howled unusually loud as his body was covered with earth. Then having paid their respects, they made off into the wilderness. Forty days later, the monks came to take up the body of Saint Cosmas and translate it to the monastery, but it was no longer in the grave. Where it now is God alone knows." (*Synaxarion*)

## SEPTEMBER 23

## † The Conception of John the Baptist

"On this day are celebrated God's mercy, His wondrous act and His wisdom: His mercy towards the devout and righteous parents of St John, the aged Zacharias and Elisabeth, who had all their lives begged a child of God; the wonder of the conception of John in Elisabeth's more-than-aged womb; and the wisdom of the dispensation of man's salvation." (*Prologue*)  
 The story of the Baptist's conception is told in the first chapter of St Luke's Gospel.

## Holy Martyr Iraida (Rais) of Alexandria (398)

She was an Egyptian maiden, variously called Iraida, Rais and Raida. One day, while drawing water from a well near the sea, she saw a ship laden with Christians being taken by their pagan persecutors to torture and death. By God's grace, Iraida was touched by a desire to suffer for the Lord. She went to the ship, confessed herself to be a Christian, and was immediately taken prisoner with the other servants of Christ. They were all taken to the Egyptian town of Antinopolis, where Iraida was the first of the company to be beheaded.

## New Martyr John of Epirus (1814)

He was born to Muslim parents in Konitsa of Albania — the ancient region of Epirus. His father was a prominent ruler among the Muslims and a member of the Sufi order, sometimes called dervishes, a mystical Islamic sect. John himself became a prominent Sufi and settled in Joannina. Though not a Christian, he attended to his conscience and lived a sober and prayerful life.

Over time, he became increasingly attracted to the Christian faith and, in time, asked for holy Baptism. No Christian in his region dared to baptize him, knowing the reprisals that would follow. So John migrated to Ithaka, was baptized, and settled there in a village called Xiromeron, where he married and lived as a simple countryman. In 1813, John's father somehow learned where he was, and that he had become a Christian. He sent two Sufis to bring him back and restore him to the Muslim faith. Because of this, the Ottoman authorities on Ithaka learned who he was and brought him before a judge. To each of the judge's questions John would only reply 'I am a Christian and I am called John.'

Realizing that no amount of persuasion or coercion would move him, the authorities determined to behead him. At his execution, since they would not loose his hands so that he could make the sign of the Cross, John cried out 'Lord, Remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom!' With these words he submitted himself to a Martyr's end. The Turks intended to leave his body for the dogs, but pious Christians retrieved it and secretly gave it honorable burial.

## SEPTEMBER 24

## † Holy Protomartyr Thecla, Equal to the Apostles (1st c.)

She was born in Iconium of prominent pagan parents. At the age of eighteen she was instructed in the Faith of Christ by the Apostle Paul himself. She forsook her family and her betrothed, vowing herself to a life of virginity in the service of Christ. She traveled in the ministry of the Gospel with St Paul. After many travels and sufferings for the sake of Christ, she retired to Seleucia to devote herself to prayer and asceticism. There she healed many of the sick by her prayers, and brought many more to the Faith. Some local doctors envied her and sent some young men to rape her, superstitiously thinking that her healing powers might reside in her virginity. The *Prologue* says Thecla fled from these insolent young men and, when she saw that they would catch her, prayed to God for help in front of a rock, and the rock opened and hid the holy maiden and pride of Christ. This rock was her hiding-place and her tomb.

## St Silouan, elder of Mt Athos (1938) (September 11 OC)

He was a Russian peasant who traveled to Mt Athos and became a monk in the Russian Monastery of St Panteleimon. He lived so simply, humbly and quietly that he might be forgotten had not Fr Sophrony (Sakharov) become his spiritual child and, after the Saint's repose, written a book describing his life and teaching: *St Silouan of Mt Athos*, one of the great spiritual books of our time. It was through Fr Sophrony's efforts that St Silouan was glorified as a Saint.

Following a vision of Christ Himself, St Silouan withdrew to a hermitage to devote himself entirely to prayer; but he was called back to serve as steward to the monastery. Though he now supervised some two hundred men, he only increased his prayers, withdrawing to his cell to pray with tears for each individual worker under his care. For more than fifteen years he struggled with demonic attacks during prayer until he was almost in despair. At this point Christ spoke to him in a vision, saying 'The proud always suffer from demons.' Silouan answered 'Lord, teach me what I must do that my soul may become humble.' To this he received the reply, *Keep thy mind in hell, and despair not.* Silouan made this his discipline in every moment of his life, and was granted the grace of pure prayer. He said that if he ever let his mind wander from the fire of hell, disruptive thoughts would once again plague him. In his humiliation he was filled with a pervasive love for all — he said many times that the final criterion of true Christian faith is unfeigned love for enemies, and that 'to pray for others is to shed blood.'

St Silouan demonstrates that the Church's true Theologians are those who manifest in their own lives the fruits of the Church's hesychastic spirituality, however insignificant they may appear to the eyes of the world.

#### St Stephen, First-crowned King of Serbia (Simon the Monk) (1224)

"Crowned king at Zica, his foundation, by his brother and spiritual father, St Sava, he was a devout Christian and a wise and peace-loving ruler. Stephen, together with St Sava, raised Orthodoxy to great heights among his people. At his desire, St Sava made him a monk at the time of his death, giving him the name of Simon. He entered into rest in the Lord on September 24th, 1224, and his relics are preserved at Studenica." (*Prologue*)

#### SEPTEMBER 25

##### † Our Righteous Mother Euphrosyne (~445)

She was the daughter of a wealthy Christian, Paphnutius, who with his wife brought up Euphrosyne in piety. Not wishing to marry, she secretly fled her home and its wealth, dressed herself in men's clothing and entered a monastery using the name of Smaragdus. There she lived in asceticism for thirty-eight years. She only revealed her identity on her death bed. Her father Paphnutius became a monk in the same monastery, and entered into repose ten years after his daughter.

##### † Our Holy Father Sergius of Radonezh (1392)

'Our righteous Father Sergius was born in Rostov, north of Moscow, about the year 1314. Named Bartholomew in baptism, he was brought up in Radonezh, and at the death of his parents he withdrew to the wilderness to become a monk. It is notable that without having been trained in a monastery, he was of such a spiritual stature as to be able to take up the perilous eremitical life from the beginning, without falling into delusion or despondency. When he had endured with courage the deprivations of the solitary life, other monks began to come to him, for whom he was made abbot against his will. On the counsel of Philotheus, Patriarch of Constantinople, he organized his monks according to the cenobitic li appointing duties to each. While Anthony and Theodosius of Kiev, and the other righteous Fathers before Sergius, had established their monasteries near to cities, Sergius was the leader and light of those who went far into the wilderness, and after his example the untrodden forests of northern Russia were settled by monks. When Grand Duke Demetrius Donskoy was about to go to battle against the invading Tartars, he first sought the blessing of Saint Sergius, through whose prayers he was triumphant. Saint Sergius was adorned with the highest virtues of Christ-like humility and burning love for God and neighbor, and received the gift of working wonders, of casting out demons, and of discretion for leading souls to salvation. When he served the Divine Liturgy, and Angel served him visibly; he was also vouchsafed the visitation of the most holy Theotokos with the Apostles Peter and John. He was gathered to his Fathers on September 25, 1392. At the recovery of his holy relics on July 5th, 1422, his body and garments were found fragrant and incorrupt. His life was written by the monk Epiphanius, who knew him.' (*Great Horologion*)

##### Commemoration of the Great Earthquake at Constantinople (447) and the Miracle of the Trisagion

During the reign of the Emperor Theophilus, the city of Constantinople was visited by earthquakes for almost four months. The Emperor, the Patriarch Proclus, and the people joined in a barefoot procession to make prayer to God for their safety. While they were gathered, the tremors increased dramatically, and a young boy was taken up into the sky in the sight of the people, who fearfully cried out *Kyrie eleison!* When the boy came down from the heavens, he said that he had been among choirs of Angels who sang *Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us!* and that a voice had commanded him to tell the Patriarch that the people should make supplication to God in this way. The Patriarch instructed the people to sing this hymn, whereupon the ground stopped shaking and the child died.

The Empress Pulcheria (September 10) asked the Patriarch to order that this hymn be chanted henceforth in the Divine Liturgy, as it still is today.

##### Venerable Dosithea, recluse of the Kiev Caves (1776)

She was born to landed gentry of Riazan province in 1721. Her name in secular life is not recorded. For much of her childhood she was cared for by her grandmother the nun Porphyria, from whom she acquired a love for the ascetical struggle. When Porphyria took the Great Schema, the child returned home, but continued to live as much like a nun as she could. Her parents were eager to marry her as soon as possible, but she foiled their plans by leaving home at the age of fifteen, dressed as a peasant boy and calling herself Dositheus. In this guise she entered the Lavra of St Sergius. Three years later she fled to avoid discovery by her parents, and went to the Lavra of Kiev. There she was turned away, since she had no passport; so she took up the hermit's life in cave near Kitayev Skete, living only on bread, water and a few wild plants. Before long her gifts of prophecy became known, and the counsel of 'Dositheus the Hermit' was sought out by many of the faithful. She would speak to her many visitors through a small window that did not allow them to see her face. The Empress Elizabeth visited her in 1744, and at her request 'Dositheus' received monastic tonsure. When the young Prochor Moshnin — one day to be known as St Seraphim of Sarov (January 2) — visited her, she foresaw his holy future, blessed him and



directed him to the Monastery of Sarov, instructing him to practice the Jesus Prayer ceaselessly.

Later, the eremitic life was banned in Russia by Imperial decree, so 'Dositheus' moved to the Kiev Caves Lavra, then to a remote cell at the Kitaya Skete. When she discerned that the time of her death was near, she left her cell and greeted the brethren of the Skete. The next day she was found on her knees in her cell before an icon, with a piece of paper in her hand reading 'My body is ready for burial. I beg you not to touch it and to bury it in the usual way.' Only in preparing her for burial was it discovered that she was a woman. 'Dositheus the Hermit' is counted as one of the revivers of the Orthodox hesychast tradition in Russia, where it had been almost forgotten even among monastics.

#### SEPTEMBER 26

##### † Repose of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist St John the Theologian

The holy Apostle was, by the world's reckoning, the nephew of our Savior, since his mother Salome was the daughter of St Joseph the Betrothed. Called 'the beloved disciple, St John was the only one of Christ's disciples to follow Him to the Cross. He was entrusted by the Savior with the care of the most holy Theotokos, and became like another son to her, providing for her care until the day of her repose. He preached the Gospel of Christ throughout Asia Minor, especially in Ephesus. During the persecutions of the Emperor Domitian, he was taken in bonds to Rome, where he was subjected to various tortures; but when he emerged from these miraculously unharmed, he was exiled to the island of Patmos, where he wrote the book of Revelation. After the death of Domitian, he returned to Ephesus and there wrote his Gospel and Epistles. He reposed in peace at a great old age. When his disciples later opened his grave, they found that his body was not there. He is called the Theologian because of the sublimity of theological expression in his New Testament writings.

Righteous Gideon, Judge of Israel.

#### SEPTEMBER 27

##### † Holy Martyr Callistratus and the Forty-nine Martyrs with Him (288/304)

Callistratus was born in Carthage to Christian parents. In time, he joined the army, where he was the only Christian in his regiment. One of his fellow-soldiers saw Callistratus rise during the night to pray, and reported him to their commander. Callistratus was interrogated, then, when he refused to deny his faith or make sacrifice to the idols, was harshly beaten, then tied in a sack and thrown in the sea. But the sack burst open and Callistratus emerged from the sea unharmed. Seeing this, forty-nine of his fellow-soldiers confessed Christ, and were beaten and thrown into prison with Callistratus. In prison, Callistratus instructed the newly-enlightened Christians in the faith. Finally, all of them were beheaded, according to some sources in 288, according to others in 304.

##### Holy Apostles Mark, Aristarchus and Zenas of the Seventy

St Mark was also called John; according to Acts 12:12, the apostles gathered for prayer in Jerusalem at his mother Mary's house, and was later bishop in Byblos. St Aristarchus accompanied St Paul in his travels (Acts 16:29) and was later bishop in Syrian Apamea. St Zenas is mentioned as a lawyer in Titus 3:13, and was bishop in Lydda in Palestine.

##### Our Venerable Father Sabbatius, Founder of the Monastery of Solovki (1435)

He lived for many years as a monk at the Monastery of St Cyril of White Lake, where his ascetic struggles won him the respect of his brethren. To flee from the admiration of men he moved further north to Valaam Monastery. But he still attracted the good opinion of his community, so he secretly headed still further north, planning to reach the uninhabited Solovki Island in the White Sea (a large bay of the Arctic Ocean). When he reached the coast, everyone who might take him tried to dissuade him from living in such a harsh place. He answered 'My children, I have a Master who has the power to renew the strength of the old and to enfeeble the young if He so wills. He makes the poor rich, clothes the naked, provides for the destitute and satisfies the starving with a measure of food as he fed five thousand men in the desert.'

While waiting for seasonable sailing weather he met St Germanus (July 30) who lived nearby as a hermit. Together they found a fishing boat and, casting all their trust on the Lord, made the dangerous two-day voyage and set up a hermitage on the island. It became known as a holy place, and thenceforth those living in the world knew not to settle on Solovki, or even to set foot there without good reason. After six years, St Germanus departed, and Sabbatius was left alone.

When he was old, he began to fear that he would die without receiving the life-giving Mysteries, of which he had not partaken since he left Valaam. So he returned to the mainland where he met an abbot Nathanael just as he was taking Holy Communion to a sick man. Sabbatius persuaded the abbot to hear his confession and grant him the priceless gift of Holy Communion. He then settled in a nearby chapel and made ready for his departure from this life. A wealthy merchant from Novgorod visited him to ask for his blessing. The Saint said to him, 'Spend the night here and you will see the grace of God.' The next morning the merchant came to Sabbatius' cell and found that he had reposed during the night; his cell was suffused with a beautiful scent.

The following year, St Germanus, along with St Zosimas (April 17), returned to Solovki Island and founded a monastery there, which proved to be the nurturing ground of many Saints.

#### Holy New Martyr Aquilina (1764)

She lived in the village of Zangliverion near Thessalonika. When she was still an infant, her father killed a Turkish neighbor in an argument and, to save his life, denied his Christian faith. To compound his apostasy he promised that when his daughter came of age she too would convert. Aquilina's mother, however, held fast to her faith in Christ, and brought up her daughter to love her Savior fervently. When Aquilina reached the age of eighteen, her father told her that the time had come to formally embrace Islam; he was dismayed when she replied that she would rather suffer any torment than deny Christ. Fearing for his own life, her father handed her over to the Turkish authorities. When the usual threats and promises had no effect, she was viciously beaten three times. Some pious Christians returned her, dying, to her mother, to whom she said 'I have done as you told me, and kept the confession of our faith. Surely you didn't think I would do anything else?' With this, the holy Martyr died. The *Synaxarion* relates, 'As her body was taken to be buried, every place that it passed was filled with a delightful scent, and a brilliant light came forth from her grave during the night.'

#### SEPTEMBER 28

##### † St Chariton the Confessor of Palestine (350)

He was born in Iconium during the reign of Aurelian, and knew St Thecla. He was arrested, tortured and condemned to death for his Christian faith. But before his execution was carried out, the cruel Emperor Aurelian died, and Chariton was freed. He travelled to Jerusalem and took up the ascetical life in the Palestinian wilderness. Monks gathered around him, and in the course of his life he established three monastic communities in the Holy Land. He died in peace at a great age. According to the *Prologue*, the practice of tonsuring monks originated with St Chariton.

##### Holy Prophet Baruch (6th c. BC)

He was the disciple and scribe of the Prophet Jeremiah; his name means "blessed." The prophetic book that bears his name is not included in the Protestant canon of scripture; if your Bible does not contain it, look for another Bible.

##### Holy Martyr Vatslav (Wenceslas), King of the Czechs (929)

"The grandson of St Ludmilla, he lived as king in spiritual striving in the Faith like the great ascetics, and strengthened the Orthodox faith among his people. He took care when sitting in judgement that no innocent man should suffer. In his zeal for the Christian faith and his love for his neighbour, holy Vatslav bought pagan children who had been sold as slaves and immediately baptised them, bringing them up as Christians. He translated St John's Gospel into Czech and brought the relics of St Vitus and his grandmother, Ludmilla, to Prague. His brother Boleslav invited him to stay and killed him at his court. Immediately after this, Boleslav began to make German priests and to have the Liturgy celebrated in Latin. Holy Vatslav suffered in 929. His relics are preserved in Prague." (*Prologue*) This is the "Good King Wenceslaus" of the popular Christmas carol.

#### SEPTEMBER 29

##### St Cyriacus the Solitary (555/557)

He was born in Corinth of pious Christian parents. At the age of eighteen he went to Palestine, where, after studying under several holy fathers, he entered monastic life and became the disciple of St Gerasim of the Jordan. After St Gerasim's death he lived in strict solitude, asceticism and silence for many years, finally entering the monastery of St Chariton, where he reposed in peace at the age of 109. Despite his very severe asceticism, he was large and strong, remaining so until the end of his life. According to the rule of St Chariton, he and his fellow-monks ate only once a day, after sunset. In the desert, he lived for years on nothing but the raw plants that he gathered there. He said of himself that, while he was a monk, the sun never saw him eat or be angry with any man.

##### St Mary of Palestine (6th c.)

"She was at first a reader of the Psalter in the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem, but, being beautiful, she was a source of scandal to the sinful-minded. In order not to be a cause of sin in others, Mary withdrew to the wilderness of Souka with a basket of beans and a flask of water. She spent eighteen years in the desert and, by God's power, never lacked either beans nor water. Disciples of St Cyriacus found her during her lifetime, and later buried her." (*Prologue*)

##### Holy Martyrs Dada and those with them (4th c.)

Dada was a high Persian official serving in the court of King Shapur II, and secretly a Christian. When he was appointed governor of a province some way from the court, Dada began to worship and proclaim Christ openly. This came to the attention of the King, who sent one of his sons, Gubarlaheza, to try and execute him. Dada was condemned and condemned to be thrown into a fiery furnace. But when Dada made the sign of the Cross, the fire went out, amazing the Prince and

eventually leading him to convert to Christ.

The outraged King had his son thrown in prison and put to torture. Gubarialhas endured days of hideous torture without complaint and, though he had been subjected to horrible mutilations, emerged from his cell unscathed. This wonder led others, including two more of the King's own children or kin, to embrace Christ. Kazoy, the King's daughter, was allowed to enter into rest as soon as her tortures began. Gubarialhas was miraculously baptised in the midst of further tortures: A voice from on high pronounced the words of baptism, and a shower of water and oil fell on the Martyr. Not long afterward, he perished, along with Dada and Kasdios, one of Gubarialhas' kinsmen who had been convinced of the Truth by the miracles he had seen.

#### Venerable Cyprian of Ustiug (1276)

"Saint Cyprian founded the Monastery of the Entry into the Temple of the Mother of God, near Ustiug in the district of Vologda, in 1212, and he made over all his property to it. He never left the monastery after he became Abbot but gave himself to ascetic labours, as if each day were his last on earth. He watched over the spiritual progress of his monks with fatherly love and willingly sacrificed his time and energy for their good. Saint Cyprian fell asleep in the Lord in 1276. His holy relics lie in his monastery." (*Synaxarion*)

#### SEPTEMBER 30

#### † St Gregory the Enlightener, Bishop of Armenia (325/335)

He was a nobleman, related to the imperial houses of Persia and Armenia. When these two houses went to war with one another, Gregory, withdrew to Caesarea in Cappadocia, where he heard the Gospel proclaimed and came to faith in Christ. There he also married and had two sons. After his wife's death he returned to his homeland and served in the court of Tiridates, king of Armenia. When the king discovered that Gregory was a Christian, he subjected the Saint to many tortures, finally having him cast into a pit full of mire and poisonous reptiles. But Gregory was miraculously kept alive in the pit for fourteen years, during which a widow secretly provided for his needs. King Tiridates, still cruelly persecuting the Christians in his land, eventually went mad and became like a wild animal. In a dream, the king's sister was told that her brother would only be restored to sanity when Gregory was freed from the pit. This was done, and Gregory healed and baptised his persecutor. At the king's request, Gregory was made bishop of Armenia. As bishop he brought countless thousands to faith in Christ and is counted as the Enlightener of Armenia. In old age he retired into ascetical life, and reposed in peace.

#### Venerable Gregory of Pelshma (1441 or 1451)

He was born into a powerful boyar family in the city of Galich. Early in life he was drawn to the ascetical life, and was distressed when his parents arranged for him to be married at the age of only fifteen. By a mysterious providence, both his parents died before the wedding could be held, and St Gregory very soon distributed his considerable wealth to the poor, freed all his serfs, and went to the nearest monastery. Such was his holiness of life that he rose to be abbot of the monastery, but as in his youth he felt burdened by the admiration and attention of men, so he left for the monastery of St Dionysius of Glushitsa, where he strove to live a hidden life. His *stars*, St Dionysius, discerned Gregory's spiritual gifts and wanted him to found his own monastery, but the Saint resisted, desiring only to live in humility and obedience, unknown to the world. At the age of 104 Gregory, with his elder's blessing, went to live as a hermit in a small cell on the banks of the River Pelshma. After a few years other monks came to live the hesychastic life with him and, as his elder had desired, Gregory against his will became the abbot of a new monastery.

Abbot Gregory excelled not only in prayer but in his works of love for the poor, many of whom came to him in times of famine, when he would give them the small reserves of the monastery. More than once he traveled to Moscow to rebuke the Princes for their evil deeds. One of these, Prince Basil II, was so angered by the 'presumption' of the Saint that he had him thrown from a bridge into a deep gorge, but he emerged miraculously unharmed.

At the age of 127, St Gregory felt his end approaching and prepared himself. He told his disciples to throw his body into a swamp when he died, but after his repose they disobeyed and gave him honorable burial. A beautiful fragrance filled the church and, for the first time, a miracle of healing was performed through the Saint's relics, which from that time forward were the source of countless wonders.

#### Our Father among the Saints Michael, Metropolitan of Kiev (992)

When Prince Vladimir, Equal to the Apostles (July 15), received holy Baptism, he sent an embassy to Constantinople asking that clergy be sent to enlighten the Russian land and to establish Christ's Church there. Patriarch Nicolas II Chrysoberges (December 16) appointed Michael, a wise and blameless bishop, to be Metropolitan of Russia. Saint Michael traveled to Kiev with six bishops and a large number of clergy to aid him in his daunting work. He began by baptising the Prince's family and the nobles of Kiev. Prince Vladimir used his authority to have the pagan idols pulled down, and enjoined all the people

to accept Baptism. Thus the people of Kiev gathered *en masse* on the banks of the Dnieper and were baptized by the Metropolitan and his clergy, establishing Kiev as the first Christian city in Russia. Paganism was deeply entrenched everywhere in this wild land, and the proclamation of the Gospel was difficult and dangerous. None the less, the holy Metropolitan in his own lifetime was able to cast down the idols in Novgorod and Rostov and establish the Church there.

Metropolitan Michael reposed in peace in 992, having planted in Russia the seeds of Russian Orthodoxy, which in coming generations would become the very soul of the Russian people. His relics were found to be incorrupt in the twelfth century and were translated to the Monastery of the Kiev Caves.

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

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

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