

ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО ПРѢПОДѢЛА ГЕОРГІА РАДОНЕЖСКАГО St. Sergius Publishing House

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Prologue from Ochrid by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic



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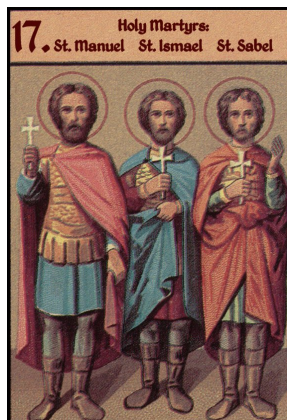
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The Holy Martyrs Manuel, Sabel and Ishmael

Manuel, Sabel and Ishmael were brothers born in Persia of a pagan father and a Christian mother. They were educated in the spirit of Christianity and were baptized. As Christians they were high-ranking officials at the court of King Alamundar. They were sent to Emperor Julian the Apostate to conduct negotiations and to confirm peace between the Persian and Graeco-Roman empires. The apostate emperor arranged some sort of blasphemous celebration in honor of the idols in Chalcedon. At this celebration, the emperor, with his noblemen, offered sacrifices to the idols. The Persian emissaries absented themselves from this celebration. The emperor summoned them and ordered that they also take part in the celebration and to offer sacrifices to the gods. They declared that they were foreign citizens and that they came as emissaries of the Persian king for the sake of establishing peace between the two empires and not for anything else; that they are Christians and that they consider it unworthy to worship dead idols and to offer them sacrifices. The emperor became enraged and cast them into prison. The next day, he brought them out and again began to dispute with them about faith, but the holy brothers were adamant and unwavering. They were then bound naked to trees, beaten and scraped with an iron brush. During the entire time of torturing they prayed to God with thanksgiving for their tortures: "O sweet Jesus these torments are sweet for the sake of Your love!" An angel of God appeared to them, comforted them and removed every pain from them. Contrary to all international relations, the wicked Emperor Julian finally pronounced judgment that the three brothers be beheaded. When they were beheaded, there was a great earthquake; the earth split and received the bodies of the holy martyrs so that the pagans could not burn their bodies as ordered by the emperor. After that the earth gave up the bodies of these martyrs so that Christians could find them and honorably bury them. Many miracles occurred over their relics which, when many pagans saw, they converted to the Christian Faith. When the Persian king, upon hearing how Julian inhumanely gave his emissaries over to death, he prepared an army against him. Convinced of victory, Julian set out against the Persian Empire but he was overwhelmingly defeated and perished in shame to the joy and ridicule of the entire world.

The Venerable Pior

Pior was a hermit (Silentary) in Nitria. Inflamed with love for God, Pior, at an early age, renounced the world and withdrew to the Egyptian wilderness where he heroically lived a life of asceticism. It is said that he never sat at the table to eat but that he always ate standing and working. When he was asked why he does this, St. Pior replied: "I do not want to be occupied with eating as an occupation but rather as something marginal." When they called him in council to judge a brother who had committed a sin, Pior arrived carrying a sack of sand on his back and on his chest a small bag of sand. Asked what does that mean, the saint replied: "The sack of sand on my back are my sins which I do not see and the bag of sand on my chest are the sins of my brother which I have to judge." All the brethren were then ashamed and cried out: "This is the path of salvation!" Pior lived to be a hundred years old and

reposed in the Lord in the fourth century.

Reflection

The adversaries of Christ, through their efforts against Christ, always achieved the opposite results. Instead of stopping the river of Christianity, they have widened it, deepened it and made it louder. Instead of drying Christianity up they have, so to speak, caused a flood throughout the entire world. Where one martyr fell, a company of Christians was created; where shame was committed, glory sprouted; where it was said the end of Christianity, there was the beginning of luxuriant crops. In spite of all international considerations and customs, Julian the Apostate, because of his insane idolatrous fanaticism, killed the Persian emissaries for peace; Manuel, Sabel and Ishmael. What did Julian accomplish by this? He multiplied the number of Christians, increased the number of martyrs and hastened his own end and the end of paganism. Directly and unwillingly, the apostate helped in the spreading and deepening of Christianity, not only by his evil persecution but also by his inadvertent statements. Thus in discussions with Christians, Julian stated: "Christ did nothing in His life that would merit glory, except if that is counted as a great deed, that He healed the lame, the blind and expelled demons!" O wretched Julian! As if the opening of the eyes of only one blind man by the powerful word alone was not a greater deed, than the subjugation of ten kingdoms! How valuable is it, that Julian, as the greatest traitor of Christ after Judas, recognized the miracles of Christ.

Contemplation

To contemplate the miraculous Transfiguration of the Lord Jesus: "And after six days Jesus took Peter, James and John his brother and brought them: up into a high mountain apart. And was transfigured before them" (St. Matthew 17:1-2):

1. How the face of the transfigured Lord shone as the sun;
2. How, even I, darkened by sin, can shine by Christ's power and grace with the original radiance of sinless man.

Homily

About the punishment of those who bear false witness

"The false witness will not go unpunished and he who utters lies will perish" (Proverbs 19:9).

God and all the hosts of heaven see everything that happens in the world. Therefore, how can man conceal the truth from so many witnesses of the truth? And, not only do the heavenly hosts see the truth, but they also are zealous for the truth. Therefore, how can a mortal man go against the truth, which means, to go against the myriads of heavenly zealots for the truth? In truth, darkened in the mind is the one who thinks that he can conceal the truth and proclaim a lie instead of truth. When millions of discerning angels know the truth, can a man conceal the truth? Can someone rise up against the truth and not be punished? O my brethren, there is nothing more false than falsehood! Nothing more unsuccessful! Nothing more arrogant! Nothing more insane!

God and all the Hosts of heaven see that which occurs inside man. Especially the Guardian Angel of man sees that. And this Guardian Angel does not tolerate that man brings out from himself and about himself that which is not in him. If a man remains persistent in his lie, his Angel will abandon him and will turn him over completely to the spirits of lies. Then, woe to that man! Of what benefit is it to witness falsely against the entire world if his Angel would witness truthfully against him before God and the hosts of heaven! It would be better for that man if he had not been born. For, whoever lies, lies to the Spirit of God and the Spirit of God abandons the liar in darkness and death.

O Lord of Truth, sustain us by the power of Your Holy Spirit that we never witness falsely. Sweeten to us Your Holy Truth and turn away a false word from our tongue.

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July 1st (New Style) • June 18th (Old Style)



The Holy Martyr Leontius

Leontius was a Roman commander in Tripoli in Phoenicia during the reign of Emperor Vespasian. He was born in Hellas (Greece) "of great physical stature, powerful, strong and brave in battles." Hadrian, the imperial deputy, sent a military detachment to arrest Leontius, for Hadrian was a fierce adversary and persecutor of Christians. Hypatius, the senior officer of this detachment, became ill enroute with a bitter fever because of which the detachment had to slow down their march. One night an angel of God appeared to Hypatius and said to him: "If you want to be well, cry out three times toward heaven with all your soldiers: 'O God of Leontius help me!'"

Hypatius informed his companions of his vision and all in unison cried out as the angel instructed and immediately Hypatius became well. This miracle astonished all but especially Theodulus. Hypatius and Theodulus then went ahead of the other soldiers to seek Commander Leontius. Leontius received them graciously and served them. When he expounded his faith in Christ to them,

their hearts burned with love for Christ and, at that moment, a bright cloud descended upon Hypatius and Theodulus and dew from a cloud descended upon them. That was the Holy Spirit of God Himself baptizing these converted souls and St. Leontius, at that moment, spoke these words: "In the name of the All-holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit." The evil Hadrian, learning that Hypatius and Theodulus became Christians, ordered that they be scourged without mercy and following that to be beheaded with an axe. And so, these two spiritual children of Leontius died.

Then Hadrian prescribed cruel tortures for Leontius but Leontius remained unwavering in his holy faith. His entire body was covered with wounds but he diligently prayed to God not to abandon him. In the midst of the cruelest torments, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, encouraged and comforted him. Finally, they knocked the martyr Leontius to the ground and beat him until he gave up his soul to God. The sufferings of St. Leontius was personally witnessed by Kir Notarius who recorded all that he saw on lead tablets and placed them in the martyr's grave. St. Leontius suffered honorably in the year 73 A.D.

Venerable Leontius, the Discerner

Leontius was of Greek descent from the Peloponnese. He lived a life of asceticism sixty years in the monastery Dionysiou (Mt. Athos) and entered into rest in the year 1605 A.D. being eighty-five years of age.

It is said that this saint entered the monastery only once and only once did he leave the monastery in sixty full years. That is: he entered when he first went to Dionysiou and departed when they carried him out to bury him. He possessed the miraculous gift of discernment and prophecy and following his death myrrh flowed from his relics.

Reflection

A scientist examines natural phenomenon with great attention and we, with greater attention, should examine the phenomenons and the actions of the grace of God. Behold, what one of the great spiritual fathers' witnesses about the act of Holy Communion. Father John of Kronstadt writes: "I am amazed at the greatness and the life-giving power of divine Communion. An elderly woman, who was spitting blood and was so completely exhausted from not being able to eat anything, began to recover the day that she received Communion from me. A young girl close to death began to recover, eat, drink and speak after Communion whereas, before that, she was unconscious, in convulsions and did not eat or drink anything." O, if every priest, with the attention of a scientist and with the love of a prayerful man, did observe and follow the actions of the Grace of Holy Communion similar to Father John!

Contemplation

To contemplate the miraculous healing of the young man whom the devil tormented, at times throwing him into the fire and, at times, into the water: "Lord, have pity on my son: for he is a lunatic and suffers severely; for often times he falls into the fire and often times into the water" (St. Matthew 17:14):

1. How the Lord rebuked the devil and the young man was made whole;
2. How even the evil spirit casts me at times into the fire of passions and at times into the water of carnality;
3. How even the Lord can save me from falling into the fire and into the water if only I pray to Him.

Homily

About God's indebtedness

"He who has compassion on the poor lends to God and He will repay Him for his good deed" (Proverbs 19:17).

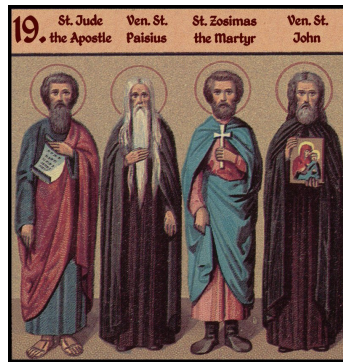
The poor man who begs and the rich man who gives both are indebted to the Lord, but only under the condition that the poor man begs in the name of the Lord with humility and that the rich man gives in the name of the Lord with compassion. Everyone who receives should know that he receives that which belongs to God and everyone who gives should know that he gives that which belongs to God. Such giving has a price and such receiving has a price. All of us enter this world naked and naked shall we leave this world. All of us are beggars before the Lord for we possess nothing that we have not received from the Lord. Therefore, give to the poor man as God as given to you. You take what is another's and you give to your own when you perform charity. The poor man is closer to you than all of your goods even as God, the Creator of men, every man is incomparably more precious than all of his goods. If you have been given riches, it was given to you for temptation: that your heart be tempted! That God and all the heavenly hosts see whether you understood from whom are all your riches and why they were given to you. Blessed are you if you know that your goods are from God and belong to God! Blessed are you if you consider the poor as your companions, among your family members and share with them from that which God has entrusted to you!

O how immeasurable is God's love for mankind! Behold, all that you have belongs to God but, nevertheless, God considers Himself your debtor if you take from Him and give to the poor and He will repay you for your good. What kind of mercy can be compared to this!

O Man-loving Lord, open our minds to understand the mystery of Your mercy and soften our hearts as wax, that as wax they burn and shine with the reflection of Your inexpressible mercy!

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July 2nd (New Style) • June 19th (Old Style)



The Holy Apostle Jude

Saint Jude was one of the Twelve Apostles. He was the son of Joseph and Salome and the brother of James, the brother of the Lord. With Salome, the daughter of Angeja the son of Varahina, the brother of Zacharias, Joseph the carpenter had four sons: James, Hosea, Simon and Jude. This Jude is sometimes called: "Jude, the brother of James" because of his more famous brother (St. Luke 6:16 Acts 1:14). St. Jude begins his epistle in this manner: "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and the brother of James" (St. Jude 1:1). Even though he could be called the brother of the Lord as much as James, he did not do this out of humility and shame for, in the beginning, he did not believe Christ the Lord. When the elder Joseph, before his death, wanted to leave a portion of his estate to Jesus as well as to his other children, all of them protested this, even Jude, only James voluntarily set aside a share of his portion and intended it for Jesus. Jude is also called Levi and Thaddeaus. There is another Thaddeaus of the Seventy Apostles (August 21) but this Thaddeaus or Jude was one of the Great Apostles. Jude preached the Gospel throughout Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Idumedia, Syria, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Armenia. In Edessa, the town of Abgar, he augmented the preaching of the other Thaddeaus. When Jude preached throughout the regions around Ararat he was captured by pagans, crucified on a cross and killed by being shot throughout with arrows to eternally reign in the Kingdom of Christ.

Venerable Paisius the Great

Paisius was an Egyptian by birth and nationality. After a vision in a dream, his mother dedicated him to the service of God. As a young man, Paisius came to the Venerable Pambo who received him as his disciple and he was a co-disciple of Venerable John Kolovos (The Short) who wrote the biography of Paisius. To the joy of his spiritual father, Paisius exerted labor after labor and mortification after mortification. Many times the Prophet Jeremiah, whom he especially loved and often read, appeared to him; even the angels of God often appeared to him; even the Lord Christ Himself appeared to him. "Peace be with you my beloved chosen one!" the Lord Christ said to him. By the great grace of God, Paisius possessed the special gift of abstaining from food. Often he did not taste bread for fifteen days, more often for a week and once, in the witness of St. John the Short, he went for seventy days without partaking of anything. He waged a great struggle with the spirits of evil, who appeared to him at times exactly as they are and, at times in the form of radiant angels. But the blessed servant of God did not permit himself to be deceived and fascinated. Paisius was famous throughout Egypt as a discernor and miracle-worker. He took up habitation in eternity in the year 400 A.D. The Venerable Isidore of Pelusium translated the relics of Paisius to his monastery and honorably buried them.

The Holy Apostle Zosimas

Zosimas was a Roman soldier during the reign of Emperor Trajan. He courageously confessed his faith in Christ the Lord for which he endured cruel tortures. In the midst of his tortures, he heard a voice from heaven saying: "Be brave Zosimas and sign yourself with the cross, I am with you!" Angels of God appeared to him in prison. After many tortures, Zosimas was beheaded in the year 116 A.D.

Venerable John the Hermit (Anchorite)

John lived a life of asceticism in the sixth century in the proximity of Jerusalem. Through his mortification, he achieved a high degree of purity and power so that even the wild beasts were submissive to him. John reposed in the Lord in extreme old age in the year 586 A.D.

Reflection

The monks once inquired of Paisius the Great: "Father, speak to us a word of salvation and how, according to God, we should live?" The elder replied to them: "Go and keep the commandments of God and preserve the traditions of the Fathers." The tradition of the Fathers is the experience of the saints in the spiritual field, the enormous experience of nearly two-thousand years, the experience of many hundreds and thousands of holy men and women. What a very rich depository of wisdom! What kind of an immense mass of proofs of every truth of Holy Scripture! All of that wealth, all of that wisdom, all of those proofs, all of this experience the Protestants have rejected! O madness inexpressible! O, the poverty of beggars!

Contemplation

To contemplate the miraculous healing of the two blind men:"

"And behold, two blind men sitting by the wayside, heard that Jesus was passing by, and cried out, saying: 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!' " (St. Matthew 20:30):

1. How the two blind men cried out to the Lord: "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!";
2. How the merciful Lord touched their eyes and they saw;
3. How I also am blinded by sin; and how even I can see if I cry out to the Lord to touch me.

Homily

About revenge and the Avenger

"Say not, I will repay evil! Trust in the Lord and He will help you" (Proverbs 20:22).

Do not be vengeful; do not return evil for evil. The evil from your neighbor is sufficient. If you return evil for evil to him, you will double the evil in the world. If you do not return evil for evil to him, he can still burn out his evil through repentance. Thus, you will reduce evil in the world through patience and forgiveness.

Do not be vengeful; do not return evil for evil. "But wait on the Lord," He sees and remembers and, in your time, even you and your evil doer will know that God sees and remembers. You ask yourself: What have I done in that I have not returned evil for evil? You have done the wisest deed that you could do in the given situation, i.e.; you have relinquished your struggle to the One Stronger than yourself and the Stronger will victoriously fight for you. If you enter into battle with the evil doer you might be defeated. But God cannot be defeated. Therefore, relinquish your struggle to the Victorious and Undefeated One and patiently wait.

Learn from a small child. If someone attacks a child in the presence of his parents, the child does not return the attack by attacking but rather looks at his parents and cries. The child knows that his parents will protect him. How is it that you do not know what a little child knows? Your heavenly Parent is constantly beside you. That is why, do not be vengeful; do not return evil for evil rather look at your Parent and cry. Only in this way will you guarantee victory for yourself in conflict with evil men.

O Almighty Lord Who said: "Vengeance is Mine" (Romans 12:19 Hebrews 10:30), protect us from the unrighteous ones by Your almighty hand and restrain us from vengeance. Counsel us by Your Holy Spirit that the greater heroism is to endure rather than to avenge.

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July 3rd (New Style) • June 20th (Old Style)



The Holy Martyr Methodius, Bishop of Patara

From his youth, Methodius dedicated himself to asceticism and, as a city on a hill, was seen and summoned to the episcopacy in the city of Patara in Lycia. As a learned and eloquent hierarch, Methodius wrote against the heresy of Origen. His "God-inspired words shown throughout the entire world as lightning." The pagans rose up against him, tortured him and beheaded him in Chalchis in Syria in the year 311 A.D.

The Holy Martyrs Aristocles, Dimitrianus and Athanasius

Aristocles was a priest of the cathedral church in the town of Tamasus on Cyprus and lived a God-pleasing life. Because of his great zeal for the Faith, Aristocles was made worthy of a voice from heaven instructing him to go to Salamis in Cyprus and to receive the wreath of martyrdom. Dimitrianus the deacon and Athanasius the reader accompanied him. Arriving at Salamis, these men of God began to preach Christ. The pagans seized them and after torturing them, Aristocles was beheaded and Dimitrianus and Athanasius were burned alive in the year 306 A.D.

The Venerable Nahum of Ohrid

Nahum's principle feast is celebrated on December 23 and June 20 is his summer feast (Life of St. Nahum December 23). During the summer feast there is a great assembly of people at the monastery of St. Nahum. Many sick people come or are brought to beseech healing through faith and prayer over the relics of the saint. Not only Orthodox people but also those from other faiths come to seek favor from St. Nahum. In 1926, a Muslim from Resna brought and donated a bell to the monastery out of thanksgiving because St. Nahum healed his brother from his deathbed and restored him to life. The donor was Jemal Zizo and his brother, who was healed, was called Suleiman Zizo. Both were prominent citizens of Resna.

Saint Kallistos I, Patriarch of Constantinople

As a disciple of Gregory Sinaite, Kallistos lived a life of asceticism for twenty-eight years on Mt. Athos in the Scete of Magoula at the monastery Philotheou. He later founded the monastery of St. Mamas. He was elected patriarch of Constantinople in the year 1350 A.D. After four years he withdrew from the patriarchal throne and again returned to Mt. Athos. During the reign of John Paleologus, he was again returned to the throne where, as patriarch, he remained until his death. He died in the year 1368 A.D. enroute to Serres where he traveled to meet the Servian Empress Helena who came to seek help against the Turks. In the company of Ignatius, he compiled a beautiful guide (manual) for ascetics. In addition to this, he wrote the hagiography of St. Gregory Sinaite and St. Theodosius of Trnovo as well as numerous homilies. It is interesting to note how St. Maximus of Kapsokalyvia prophesied the death of Patriarch Kallistos. On his way to Serbia, Kallistos traveled through the Holy Mountain. Seeing him, St. Maximus said: "This elder will never see his flock again for behind him is heard the funeral chant: 'Blessed are the undefiled in the way' " (Psalm 119:1).

Saint Leucius, Bishop of the City of Brindisi (Italy)

Leucius was born in Alexandria and, at the early age, entered a monastery. He was made worthy of great revelations and powerful grace so that he resurrected the dead and drove out demons from men. At first, he was a bishop of Alexandria and, by command from heaven, Leucius crossed over to Italy to the pagan town of Brindisi, which he completely baptized and built a church to the Mother of God. After many and successful labors he took up habitation in eternity during the reign of Emperor Theodosius II, in the fifth century.

Blessed Studios

Studios was a prominent patrician and consul in Constantinople. He founded the church of St. John the Forerunner near the Golden Gates and a monastery named Studion after him. This monastery became famous for the many glorious men, spiritual fathers, ascetics and many who suffered for the Faith (martyrs), the most famous of which was St. Theodore the Studite. The Latin Crusaders destroyed this monastery in 1204 A.D. but Emperor Constantine Paleologue Porphyrogenitus rebuilt it in the year 1293 A.D. A Turkish mosque stands on that place today.

Reflection

Saint Cyprian writes about immortality: "Whenever a famous man promises you something, you would believe his promise and would not even dare to think that he who was always faithful to his word would deceive you. But behold, O treacherous one, God Himself speaks to you and you are wavering with doubt. God promised you immortality after your departure from this world and you impudently doubt that promise? This means: you do not recognize God at all: it means that by your unbelieving you insult Christ the Lord and Teacher." O how powerful is the faith of the saints of God! How obvious and understandable and well explained it is with simple and powerful examples! The unholy do not doubt because they are supposedly more rational but because they are unholy. The holier man is always more rational for in the clear mirror of his heart, he sees the truth.

Contemplation

To contemplate the miraculous withering of the unfruitful fig tree: "And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he came up to it and found nothing on it but leaves; and He said to it, 'May no fruit ever come from you henceforth forever!' And immediately the fig tree withered up" (St. Matthew 21:19):

1. How the Lord cursed the fig tree with many leaves but without fruit and the fig tree withered up;
2. How even my life with many leaves - bodily cares, desires and thoughts - and without spiritual fruit, can come under the same curse if I do not amend my ways.

Homily

About how our salvation is in the hands of God

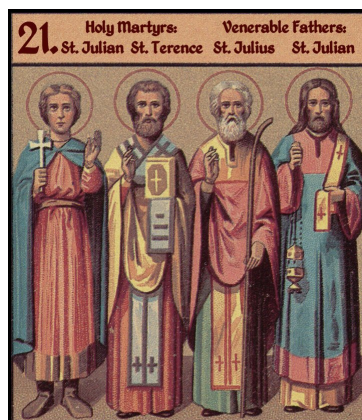
"The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but salvation is in the Lord" (Proverbs 21:31).

We are obligated to prepare ourselves but our success depends on God. All of our preparation is only a proposal to God but the proposal does not decide, but God decides. That is why people wisely say according to their experience: man proposes and God disposes. O Soldier of Christ, prepare your mind as a good horse, arm your heart with virtues, temper your will with mortifications, but know - that "salvation is in the Lord." O Merchant of Christ, practice good trade every day, exchanging the material for the spiritual, the earthly for the heavenly and mortality for immortality, but know - that "salvation is in the Lord." O Plowman of Christ, plow and re-plow your soul, sow the good evangelical seed on it every day, weed out the field of your soul from weeds, watch over it, but know that "salvation is in the Lord." A horse did not help the pharaoh in the Red Sea. Neither did the riches of Babylon help in the day of reckoning with God. A person can prepare all but, nevertheless, in that decisive moment can lose everything. For salvation is not in preparation, but in the Lord. That is why the saints, even though most prepared for the Kingdom of God and, in their hour of death, sighed not knowing whether they will be received into the Kingdom. O how well they remember the words of the Lord: "When you have done everything that was commanded you, say: 'We are unprofitable servants!' " (St. Luke 17:10). Brethren, let us be prepared for the day of temptation, well girded and armed but let us not hope in our own preparation, but in the Lord.

O Lord our Savior, help us and save us.

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July 4th (New Style) • June 21st (Old Style)



The Holy Martyr Julian of Tarsus

Julian was of noble and senatorial origin. He lived in Tarsus in Cilicia and suffered during the reign of Diocletian. Even though he was only eighteen years of age when he was subjected to torture for the Faith, St. Julian was sufficiently educated and strengthened

in Christian piety. The imperial deputy led him from town to town for an entire year torturing him and all the time trying to persuade him to deny Christ. Julian's mother followed her son from a distance. When the deputy seized Julian's mother and sent her to counsel her son to deny Christ, for three days in prison she spoke the opposite advice, teaching him and encouraging him not to despair in spirit but with thanksgiving and courage go to his death. The torturers then sewed Julian in a sack with sand, scorpions and serpents and tossed the sack into the sea and Julian's mother also died under torture. His relics were tossed by the waves to the shore and the faithful translated them to Alexandria and honorably buried them in the year 290 A.D. Later, St. Julian's relics were translated to Antioch. Later on, St. John Chrysostom, himself, delivered a eulogy (an oration of praise) for the holy martyr Julian. St. John Chrysostom said: "From the mouth of the martyr proceeded a holy voice and, together with the voice, a light emanated brighter than the rays of the sun." Further, he added: "Take anyone, be it a madman or one possessed, and bring him to the grave of this saint where the relics of the martyr repose and you will see how he (the demon) without fail will leap out and flee as from a burning fire." It is obvious from these words how numerous miracles must have taken place at the grave of St. Julian.

The Venerable Julius and Julian

Julius and Julian were brothers from the Greek province of Mirmidonia. From childhood they were reared in Christianity with the vow that they will always live in chastity and serve the Church. Julius was a presbyter and Julian a deacon. They received a decree (grammata) from Emperor Theodosius the Younger to destroy pagan temples and to build Christian churches throughout the empire. These two brothers, as two apostles, converted non-Christians to Christianity throughout the east and west (of the empire) and built churches. They built over one hundred churches during their lifetime. They reposed peacefully in the Lord near Milan. The inhabitants of Milan invoke the help of St. Julius against wolves.

The Holy Martyr Archil (Archilios) II, King of Georgia

Archil was the son of King Stephen and the grandson of the great Georgian King Wakahtang Gorgaslan. King Archil, a great Christian and a defender of Christianity, was tortured by the Muslims and beheaded for Christ on March 20, 744 A.D. He was eighty years old when he suffered for the Lord and took up habitation in blessed eternity.

The Holy Martyr Luarsab II, Prince of Kartli in Georgia

Luarsab's father, George X, suffered for the Faith and was poisoned by a Persian Shah. Luarsab, however, was cast into prison near Shiraz where he languished for seven years. Then, by order of Shah Abbas I, he was hanged in prison with two of his servants on July 21, 1622 A.D. A heavenly light was seen over his grave.

Reflection

When a man begins to train himself in keeping silent, silence to him seems to be lesser than speech; but when he is trained in silence then he knows that speech is lesser than silence. A monk said to St. Sisoës: "I would like to preserve my heart but I cannot," to which the elder responded: "How can we preserve the heart when the gate to our heart the tongue stands open?" Charillos, the nephew of Lycurgus, was once asked why his uncle issued so few laws. He replied: "For those who speak little, many laws are not needed."

Contemplation

To contemplate the miraculous healing of the blind Bartimeus: "And they came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a very great crowd, Bartimeus, a blind man the son of Timeus, was sitting by the wayside begging" (St. Mark 10:46):

1. How Bartimeus cried out to the Lord with faith for healing and the Lord healed him;
2. How, even I, blinded in the soul sit by the road which the Lord passes by and, if I cry out to Him, He will heal me.

Homily

About sowing and reaping

"He who sows iniquity reaps calamity (suffering)" (Proverbs 22:8).

If you commit an iniquity, perhaps suffering (calamity) may pass you by the very day when you commit the iniquity but suffering (calamity) has heard the voice of iniquity and unavoidably will come in its day.

Some sowing is sweet and some sowing is bitter. Some sowing resembles life but the fruit and reaping of that sowing is death.

Pay attention and learn from Holy Scripture: Eve sowed iniquity through disobedience and pain in childbirth befell her.

Cain sowed iniquity through fratricide and pain and sleepless wandering throughout the earth befell him.

Sodom and Gomorrah sowed iniquity and reaped the pain of a horrible death.

The sons of Eli the High Priest sowed iniquity for they committed a desecration along side the Ark of the Covenant and they reaped suffering for they bitterly lost their lives in battle.

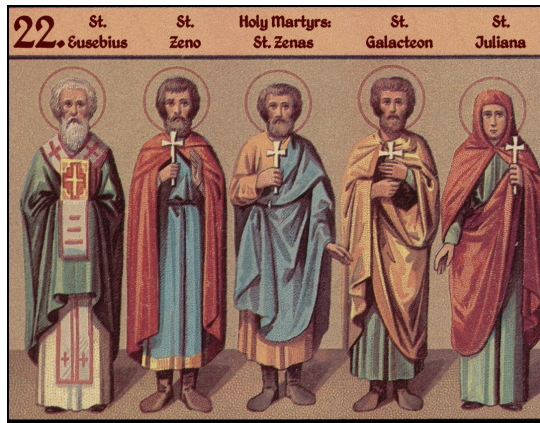
Call to mind Saul, his iniquity and his sufferings. Then again, call to mind Ahab and Jezebel. And again, call to mind Herod and Judas. Then again, call to mind today and yesterday and the days before yesterday and every other day gone by and listen to the words of every day: "He who sows iniquity reaps calamity (suffering)!" Is there a village in the world in which this teaching is not put before its eyes? Is there a roof which, beneath it, does not conceal such a teaching? Is there any living man who has not witnessed this teaching in the living examples around him?

O All-wise Lord, if we did not know Your will we would be less responsible.

But since You gave us to know Your will, O All-merciful One, grant us the strength to fulfill it throughout all the days of our lives.

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July 5th (New Style) • June 22nd (Old Style)



The Priestly-Martyr Eusebius, Bishop of Samosata

Eusebius was a great expositor of Arianism. When the throne of Antioch became vacant, Meletius was elected patriarch at the insistence of Eusebius. Meletius was a great beacon of the Church who, after his death, was found worthy of great praise by St. John Chrysostom. However, the Arians quickly banished Meletius from Antioch. When Constantine's pernicious son Constantius died another much worse than he was crowned, Julian the Apostate. During the time of Julian's persecution of Christians, St. Eusebius removed his clerical attire and donned a soldier's uniform so that, under the guise of a soldier, he visited the persecuted Church throughout Syria, Phoenicia and Palestine strengthening the Orthodox Faith everywhere and installing the necessary priests and deacons and other clergy and, in some places, bishops. Following the stormy death of Julian, St. Eusebius counseled Meletius to convene a Council in Antioch in 361 A.D. at which twenty-seven hierarchs were present and the Arian heresy was condemned once more and the Faith of Orthodoxy was proclaimed in the same manner as it was expressed at the First Ecumenical Council (Nicea 325 A.D.). Along with Meletius and Eusebius, St. Pelagius of Laodicea the famous ascetic and chaste one, made a great impact at the Council of Antioch. This Council was held during the reign of the pious Emperor Jovian. However, Emperor Jovian soon died and the wicked Valens was crowned and again the persecution of Orthodoxy ensued. St. Meletius was exiled to Armenia, Eusebius exiled to Thrace and Pelagius exiled to Arabia. After Valens, Gratian was crowned emperor and it was he who granted freedom to the Church and recalled the exiled hierarchs to their former sees. Thus, they returned: Meletius to Antioch, Eusebius to Samosata and Pelagius to Laodicea. At this time, many dioceses and many parishes were widowed and Eusebius zealously hurried to find and to give to the people canonical shepherds. When he came to the town of Doliche to enthrone the newly elected bishop Marinus and to denounce the heresy of Arius, which was strong in this town, a fanatical heretic hurled a ceramic tile at Eusebius' head and mortally wounded him. This great zealot, saint and martyr of Orthodoxy died to live eternally in the blessedness of Paradise. He suffered in the year 379 A.D.

The Holy Martyrs Zeno and Zenas

Zeno was a Roman officer in the Arabian town of Philadelphia and Zenas was his servant. When the persecution of Christians began during the reign of Emperor Maximian, St. Zeno boldly appeared before Commander Maximus, confessed his faith in the One Living God and counseled Maximus that, he too, renounce lifeless idols and embrace the only True Faith. The commander became enraged and cast Zeno into prison. When the faithful Zenas visited his master in prison, he also was seized and arrested. Both of them were tortured for Christ and finally thrown into the fire that the pagans had doused with oil. Their souls were crowned with wreaths in the Kingdom of Christ and their bodily remains were interred in the Church of St. George at the place called Cyparissos.

Reflection

Why does the good Lord permit assaults and sufferings on the True Faith while He permits the pleasure of tranquility to heresies and paganism? Why? Even St. John Chrysostom asks and immediately replies: "So that you would recognize their weakness (the weakness of the heresies and paganism) when you see that they disintegrate on their own without any disturbance and also to be convinced in the power of faith which endures misfortunes and even multiplies through its adversaries." "Therefore, if we quarrel with the pagans or with the wretched Jews, it is sufficient to emphasize as evidence of divine power that the Faith (Christianity) which was subjected to countless struggles maintained victory" even when the entire world stood against her (the Church). St. Isaac the Syrian says: "The wondrous love of God toward man is recognized when man is in misfortunes that are destroying his hope. Here, God manifests His power for his (man's) salvation. For man never recognizes the power of God in tranquility and freedom."

Contemplation

To contemplate the miraculous dumbness of Zacharias the high-priest: "And behold, you shall be dumb and unable to speak until the day when these things come to pass, because you have not believed my words which will be fulfilled in their proper time" (St. Luke 1:20):

1. How Zacharias did not believe the angel of God that the old womb of his wife (Elizabeth) could conceive and give birth and how, because of that he was struck dumb according to the words of the angel;
2. How, even I am, as though struck dumb when I cannot sufficiently speak about God's miracles because my faith is small.

Homily

About how the slothful man excuses himself

"The slothful man says: A lion is outside; in the streets I might be slain!" (Proverbs 22:13).

In order to justify his slothfulness, the slothful man emphasizes the difficulties and obstacles of a certain task and magnifies them beyond measure. If a man annoys him, he will say that the entire village annoys him; if the leaves rustle, he will justify that he is unable to go to work because of a storm; if a rabbit is in front of his house, he will say it is a lion! He says this in order not to leave the house and to delay his work.

Slothfulness is completely contrary to the nature of man. The nature of man is activity; the nature of man seeks to be occupied, to work and to build. Slothfulness is the sure sign of a distortion of the nature of man. That slothfulness is a terrible vice is clear in that an active man is never envious of the slothful man, while the slothful man is envious of the active man; in the same manner a sober man is not envious of the drunk, while the drunk is envious of the sober man.

O Lord, ever-active Creator, save us from the dull and sinful slothfulness by which we distance ourselves from our primordial nature (created) from Your image and likeness, Master of all things! Inspire us, with Your Holy Spirit, all-compassionate and joy-creating.

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July 6th (New Style) • June 23rd (Old Style)



The Holy Female Martyr Agrippina

Saint Agrippina was born and educated in Rome. From her childhood she trained herself to live an evangelical life, driving away the stench of passions from her heart and filling her heart with the sweet-smelling fragrance of purity, of virginity and chastity. She was betrothed to Christ the Lord and, as the Bride of Christ, suffered during the reign of Emperor Valerian. She endured flogging with rods until her bones were crushed. An angel of God appeared to her and strengthened her. While being tortured, St. Agrippina gave up her soul to God. Her companions, Bassa, Paula and Agathonice, translated her relics to the island of Sicily and honorably buried them there. A church was later built there in St. Agrippina's honor. Countless miracles were wrought from her relics. By the power of her relics, even the Hagarians were turned away from the town where her relics reposed. St. Agrippina rested in the year 275 A.D. and was crowned with glory.

The Holy Martyrs Eustochius and Gaius and others with them

Eustochius was a pagan priest during the reign of Emperor Maximian and by witnessing the heroism of the Christian martyrs rejected paganism and was baptized. Eudoxius, the bishop of Antioch, personally baptized him. After that Eustochius gradually converted his relatives to Christianity. His relative Gaius was baptized along with three children: Probus, Lollias and Urban. All of these, and others with them, were brought before the court, tortured and beheaded in Lystra for the sake of their faith in Christ the Lord. Their souls took up habitation in the eternal Kingdom of Christ.

The Commemoration of the Icon of the All-Holy Birth-Giver of God (Theotokos) of the Town of Vladimir

When the Tartar King Ahmet besieged Moscow, Prince John Vasilievich set out with an army to defend the city. Even though the army of Prince John was smaller in number and weaker than the Tartar army, nevertheless, it emerged victorious. All at once, an indescribable fear overcame the Tartars and they became confused and fled. Everyone ascribed this unexpected success to the icon of the All-Holy Birth-giver of God before whom the Russian people prayed for salvation from the Tartars. As a result of this, June 23 was designated in Russia for the commemoration of this miracle.

The History of the Repentance of Theophilus

Theophilus, out of envy toward the bishop, rendered his soul to the devil and, in writing, renounced Christ and the Birth-giver of God (Theotokos). However, after that Theophilus repented bitterly and obtained the forgiveness of the Holy All-pure One. After forty days of fasting and tearful prayers, Theophilus received back the paper he had written renouncing Christ, which he had given to the devil, and openly confessed his sin in church before the bishop and the people. When the bishop pronounced the words of forgiveness and administered Holy Communion to him, the face of Theophilus shone as the sun. Behold, an example of how the merciful God not only forgives the sins of true penitents but also includes them among the saints.

Reflection

Christian patience is a meek patience, but patience with a weak malice does not differ much from vengeance. Our saints are great in every good evangelical work but how great and magnificent are they in meek patience! Perhaps they appear the greatest to us in this goodness because we are the smallest in it. When the desert fathers at one time had gathered around John Kolovos (The Short) to hear an instruction a certain envious one heckled: "Your vessel, O John, is full of poison!" To that the meek John immediately responded: "You said that only seeing the exterior but what would you have said if you could see the interior?" When they brought out Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage for beheading, he commanded that twenty-five gold pieces be given to his executioner following his death.

Contemplation

To contemplate the miraculous healing of Zacharias from dumbness: "And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed and he began to speak, blessing God" (St. Luke 1:64).

1. How Zacharias became dumb because of his disbelief in the angel of God;

2. How Zacharias spoke as soon as he fulfilled the command of the angel: "And asking for a writing tablet, he wrote the words: 'John is his name' " (St. Luke 1:63);

3. How dumbness will fall from my soul as soon as I begin to fulfill the commandments of God and how my soul will be full of words and wisdom according to God.

Homily

About how we need not envy the sinners

"Be not emulous (envious) of evil men" (Proverbs 24:1).

Does anyone envy the leper? No one envies him. Why then do some envy the evil man when evil is a greater sickness than leprosy? Leprosy is a disease of the flesh but evil is a disease of the soul. A leper can be healthy within while he is unhealthy on the outside. However, the evil man can be healthy on the outside but his interior is ill, his heart is sick. Greater value has a tree that is sick on the outside but has a healthy core than a tree that is healthy on the outside but has a rotten core. Thus, leprosy is a lesser evil than evil i.e., than sin. Because under evil, the All-wise One thought of sin as evil.

Does the physician envy the sick person? He does not envy him. Neither does the righteous one envy the sinner. If you do not know whether you are righteous examine your heart: do you envy the sinner? If you envy the sinner then you are not righteous; if you do not envy the sinner, then rejoice, O righteous one of God. The sick person can envy the healthy one, but the healthy person does not envy the sick person. Neither does the righteous envy the sinner. A physician recognizes a fatal illness of his patient and, knowing that, he pities him but does not envy him. The righteous one recognizes the sickness of sin, horrifying and deadly, and does not envy the sinner but pities him.

O good and compassionate Lord, uproot envy from our hearts and implant love.

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