

Selected Lives of Saints of September-October

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Fool-for-Christ-Sake

Fool-for-Christ-sake (Yurodstvo Khrista radi) is one of the most difficult and inexplicable spiritual feats of asceticism. The word “Yurodstvo” means “insanity.” Some righteous people born normal and even very bright would fake insanity so that their feat would be harder. Historically Fools-for-Christ-Sake evoked two opposite reactions in people. Some reactions were malicious and scornful. People would persecute, beat and mock God’s fools. Others would feel compassion and be drawn to them in a subliminal way.

According to Venerable Seraphim of Sarov, the devotion of fool-for-Christ-Sake requires special courage and power of spirit, and no one should assume it on themselves without a special designation from God. Otherwise one may fail and become a false folly for Christ.

The expression “fool-for-Christ’s-sake” was first applied by Apostle Paul saying, “We are insane for Christ’s sake.” In his letter to Corinthians he explains that preaching about the crucifixion of the God-and-man is in itself insanity for the people of the world. *“For the message of the Cross is foolishness for those who are perishing, but for us who are being saved, it is the power of God... Since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe”* (1 Cor. 1:21 and 4:10).

The Christians worshiping the crucified God-and-man are perceived by non believers as “fools-for-Christ;” People blinded by unspiritual wisdom, such as the ancient scholars, dared to allege that even Jesus Christ Himself was “raving mad” (John 10:20)! Interrogating Saint Paul,

the pro-consul Festus said forthrightly to the great Apostle, *“You are out of your mind, Paul! Your great learning is driving you insane”* (Acts 26:24).

Fool-for-Christ-Sake, as a special form of asceticism, appeared in the middle of the 4th century in Egypt concurrently with monasticism. This phenomenon can be considered from two standpoints. Objectively, it is a godly calling. Fools-for-Christ-Sake are carrying out a special mission in this sinful world. Subjectively, it is a very difficult form of spiritual asceticism, “a narrow path” chosen by those aspiring for greater spiritual perfection.

Why would God call some of the righteous ones to live in such “humiliation?” In order for us to understand that, we have to take into account the fact that the life of the human society is permeated by evil through to its core — it is full of falsehood, lies, hypocrisy, greed, pride, wile and other sins. Often the most sinful feelings and intentions are concealed under a mask of righteousness, sophistication and nobility. Such people would willingly praise minor and illusory virtues while hating genuine goodness. A vivid example of such people can be seen in Judaic scribes contemporary with Christ. Once seeing their inability to accept His lore, Jesus Christ, our Lord, exclaimed, *“I thank Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes”* — that is to simple and humble people (Matt.11:25).

As we know from the Holy Script, the Lord exposed the wile of the rulers acting in a seemingly strange way. In serving God, even such great prophets as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel sometimes turned into “fools-for-Christ-sake.” Their allegedly meaningless phrases and strange actions veiled the sublime wisdom and prophecy (See, e.g.: Isaiah 8:3; Jeremiah 13:1-9, 18:1-4, 19:1-4, 20:2-10, 27:2, 38:6; Ezekiel 4:1-15, 5:1-4, 12:2-7, 24:3-5).

But God’s calling to become a Fool-for-Christ-Sake does not subdue the person’s will. Fools for Christ subjected themselves to this extraordinary asceticism not just out of obedience, but because of their yearning for righteousness. Pride is the hardest passion to be quenched. Many saints, who overcame usual physical passions relatively easily, were struggling to suppress pride and vanity throughout their lives till their last breath. Venerable John of the Ladder says, “Vanity gloats in every virtue.”

Rejecting common sense and bearing humbly the daily scorn, Fools-for-Christ-Sake cut the very roots of pride. From among all the Fools-for-Christ-Sake especially renown are Andrew, Prokopius of Ustug, St. Basil, Paraskeva of the Diveyev Monastery. (Remembrance days: October 15, July 21 and August 15 acc. to the new calendar). The asceticism of giving up property and family was not enough for them. They rejected the most outstanding feature of a personality — common use of mind, and voluntarily assumed an attitude of a person unaware of a sense of measure, manners or embarrassment.

Fool-for-Christ-Sake is a mask applied by those who have a special calling to do it. It is known that at times Fools-for-Christ-Sake would remove the mask before some people and amaze them with their wisdom and talents. A Fool-for-Christ-Sake, Pelagia of the Diveyev monastery, who was blessed to that asceticism by venerable Seraphim, was going back to a usual state during her confessions. A newly appointed preacher was deeply impressed by her mental and spiritual power. Saint Andrew, God’s fool, also removed his mask of folly when talking to his disciple Epiphany, who was later to become a renowned bishop.

Yet, in everyday life Fools-for-Christ-Sake, pretending to be insane were constantly abused and outcast by everyone. Living in the society they were as lonely as those in an inaccessible desert. Having given up every worldly property and comfort, free from all attachments to earthly

things and exposing themselves to all hazards of homeless life, those people chosen by God were like aliens from another world.

Despite all, Fools-for-Christ-Sake were always retaining sublime spirituality, constantly lifting up the eyes of their minds and hearts to God, their spirit ceaselessly aflame before Him. Acquiring great humbleness and spiritual cleanness Fools-for-Christ-Sake pleased God and received the gift of wonderworking and discernment. They sometimes accomplished such humane deeds of love to their neighbor, that would be beyond any other person. They were not shy to tell the truth openly regardless of the person; their words and sometimes extraordinary actions either criticized fiercely and condemned the unjust people who were often powerful and ominous; or gave joy and consolation to the righteous and God fearing ones.

Generally Fools-for-Christ-Sake would mix with the most sinful classes of society for the purpose of correcting and saving these people. And they did lead them, and many other outcasts to the way of goodness. Being close to God, they often relieved their compatriots from various pending misfortunes and averted God's wrath from them through prayers.

The asceticism of Fool-for-Christ-Sake was not only hard in itself, but it required special wisdom from the saintly ascetics so that their own humiliation further served to honor God and guide people, being ridiculous without sinfulness and seeming to behave shamelessly without tempting or hurting anyone.

Venerable Simeon Stylites

September 14 (Sept.1 old calendar).

Saint Simeon was born into a poor family living in the Antioch area of Syria in the middle of the 4th century. Once when he was in church listening to the singing of Beatitudes (Mat. 5:3-16), he felt a zealous aspiring for righteousness. Simeon began to pray ardently asking God for the way to attain true righteousness. Soon he had a dream in which he was digging the ground as if he were building something. A voice told him, "Dig deeper." Simeon started digging harder. Thinking that the pit he made is deep enough he stopped digging, but the voice told him to dig still deeper. The same instruction was repeated several times. Simeon began digging unceasingly till the mysterious voice stopped him saying, "Enough! And now, if you are willing to build, do so and be hard working as no success is achieved without toil."

Having decided to become a monk, he left his parents' home and took monastic vows at the neighboring cloister. There he spent some time in monastic prayers, fasting and in works of penance, after which he secluded himself in the Syrian Desert for further perfecting his self. In the desert he started a new way of asceticism — "stolpnichestvo" (Stylites). Having built a pillar of several meters high he lived on it depriving himself of the ability to lie down and have rest. Standing upright day and night, like a candle, he was praying almost ceaselessly and his thoughts were always turned to God. Besides most austere fasting, he was exposed to many other hardships: rain, scourging sun and cold. He was eating water-soaked wheat and drinking water brought to him by kind people.

His exceptional asceticism became recognized in many countries, and a lot of visitors from Arabia, Persia, Armenia, Georgia, Italy, Spain and Britain came to see him. Influenced by his extraordinary spiritual strength and fervent preaching, many pagans realized the veracity of the Christian faith and were baptized.

Saint Simeon was blessed with the gift of healing bodily and mental ailments as well as the gift to foresee the future. The Emperor Theodosius Junior the 2nd (408-450) respected Venerable

Simeon deeply and often followed his advice. When the Emperor died, his widow, queen Eudocia, was perverted to the monophysite heresy. Monophysites did not recognize dual nature of Christ — Godly and human — they believed only in the Godly one. Venerable Simeon enlightened the queen and she again became an Orthodox Christian. A new emperor Marcian (450-457) would dress as a commoner and secretly visit the venerable old man to have his counsel. Following the advice of Venerable Simeon, in the year of 451 Marcian convened the 4th Universal Congregation in Chalcedon, which denounced the false teaching of monophysites.

Saint Simeon lived longer than a hundred years and entered into rest in 459 during prayers. His relics were kept in Antioch. The Orthodox Church services and prayers devoted to Saint Simeon call him “a heavenly man and an earthly angel emitting light for the universe.

Troparion, Tone 1

O Symeon, righteous father, thou didst become a pillar of patience, and excel like the forefathers:/ Job in his sufferings, Joseph in temptation,/ and in the flesh wert like the bodiless ones./ Intercede with Christ our God that He may save our souls.

Kontakion, Tone 2

While seeking the kingdom of heaven thou wast united to mankind on earth./ Thy pillar was a chariot of fire and thou a companion of angels./ O righteous Symeon,/ intercede with Christ our God for us all.

Holy Martyr Vasilissa

September 16 (September 3 old calendar).

A nine-year-old girl, she suffered in Nicomedia not long after the death of Anthimus. The torturers covered her whole body with wounds, but she remained faithful to Christ. God preserved her unharmed in fire and before wild beasts. Her torturer, Alexander, seeing these wonders, repented and became a Christian. Vasilissa went out into a field, fell on her knees and prayed to God, thanking Him for her endurance under torture, and, while thus praying, gave her soul into God's hands. This was in the year 309.

Troparion, Tone 4

Strengthened by the power of faith,/ thou didst contend for Christ our God, O glorious Vasilissa;/ thou didst endure every affliction/ and by thy courage didst shame the pagan gods./ We beseech thee to deliver us from the power of the evil one.

Kontakion, Tone 3

Thou wast adorned with the grace of virginity and the beauty of martyrdom,/ O Vasilissa, Bride of Christ./ Thou didst bear thy lamp and run to thy Bridegroom/ and wast crowned with incorruption./ Pray for those who faithfully praise thee.

Holy Prophet Zacharias

September 18 (September 5 old calendar).

Father of St. John the Forerunner, he was the son of Barachias, of the tribe of Aaron, a high priest in descent from Abia, and held the eighth degree of service in the Temple in Jerusalem. His wife Elisabeth was sister to St. Anna, the mother of the holy Mother of God. In the reign of King Herod, the child-slayer, Zacharias was serving one day his turn in the Temple in Jerusalem. An angel of God appeared to him in the altar, and Zacharias was afraid. But the angel said to him, "*Fear not, Zacharias,*" and informed him that his wife Elisabeth would bear a son in answer to their prayers, for Zacharias and Elisabeth were both old. When Zacharias doubted the words of the heavenly messenger, the angel told him, "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God," and Zacharias was made dumb from that moment, and did not speak until his son was born and he had written on a tablet, "His name is John." Then his mouth was opened, and he glorified God. Later, when the Lord Christ was born and Herod began killing the children in Bethlehem, he sent men to find Zacharias' son and kill him, for he had heard of all that had happened to Zacharias and how John was born. Seeing the soldiers, Elisabeth took John in her arms — he was eighteen months old at that time — and fled from the house with him to a rocky and desert region. When she saw where the soldiers had driven them, she cried out to the mountain, "O mountain of God, receive a mother with her child!" and the rock opened and hid the mother and child inside itself. Herod, furious that John had not been killed, ordered that Zacharias be cut down before the altar. Zacharias' blood spilled over the marble and became as hard as stone, remaining thus as a witness to Herod's wickedness. At the place where Elisabeth hid with John, a cave opened and a spring flowed forth, and a fruit-bearing palm grew up by God's power. Forty days after Zacharias' death, blessed Elisabeth also entered into rest. The child John stayed in the wilderness, fed by an angel and guarded by God's providence, until that day when he appeared by the Jordan.

Troparion, Tone 4

Arrayed in priestly vestments, thou didst offer sacrifice according to God's law./ Thou wast a light and a seer of mysteries bearing the signs of grace within thee./ Thou wast slain in the temple of God,/ O Zacharias, Prophet of Christ./ Together with the Forerunner pray that our souls may be saved.

Kontakion, Tone 3

Zacharias, Prophet and Priest and father of the Forerunner,/ is preparing a feast for the faithful/ and is mixing a draught of righteousness./ Let us praise him,/ as a holy seer of the grace of God.

Holy Martyr Raisa

September 18 (September 5 old calendar).

Very little has come down to us of the life and death of Saint Martyr Raisa (or Iraida). We know that she was a daughter of a presbyter and suffered for the Christian faith under the Emperor Maxentius (305-312). She lived in Alexandria and was a nun at the local cloister. Once she saw a ship loaded with convicts — men, women, clergy and monks. They had been arrested for being Christians. Nobody knew where they were being taken. When Venerable Raisa visited the imprisoned Christians she was put in fetters too. Then the ship reached Antinoia in Egypt, where

the imprisoned were tortured and executed. Saint Raisa shared their fate. She was beheaded in the year 308.

Troparion:

O Jesus! Thy lamb Raisa is calling out in a loud voice: “I love Thee, my bridegroom, seeking Thee I suffer and join Thee in Thy crucifixion and burial to be blessed by you. I am tormented for Thee as I reign in Thy name, and I am dying for Thee as I live with Thee; accept me as a virgin sacrifice made with love to Thee. Through prayers, as Thou art merciful, save our souls.

Saints Joachim and Anna

September 22 (September 9 old calendar).

St. Joachim was of the tribe of Judah, and a descendant of King David. Anna was the daughter of Matthan the priest, of the tribe of Levi as was Aaron the High Priest. Matthan had three daughters: Mary, Zoia and Anna. Mary was married in Bethlehem and bore Salome; Zoia was also married in Bethlehem and bore Elisabeth, the mother of St. John the Forerunner; and Anna was married in Nazareth to Joachim, and in old age gave birth to Mary, the most holy Mother of God. Joachim and Anna had been married for fifty years, and were barren. They lived devoutly and quietly, using only a third of their income for themselves and giving a third to the poor and a third to the Temple, and they were well provided for. Once, when they were already old and were in Jerusalem to offer sacrifice to God, the High Priest, Issachar, upbraided Joachim, “You are not worthy to offer sacrifice with those childless hands.” Others who had children jostled Joachim, thrusting him back as unworthy. This caused great grief to the two aged souls, and they went home with very heavy hearts. Then the two of them gave themselves to prayer to God that He would work in them the wonder that He had worked in Abraham and Sarah, and give them a child to comfort their old age. God sent them His angel, who gave them tidings of the birth of “a daughter most blessed, by whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed, and through whom will come the salvation of the world.” Anna conceived at once, and in the ninth month gave birth to the holy Virgin Mary. St. Joachim lived for eighty years and Anna for seventy-nine, and they both entered into the kingdom of God.

Troparion, Tone 5: Let us sing praises to Joachim and Anna,/ the couple honored by God/ (and they are His kinsmen)/ They have borne for us the Maiden/ who in a manner beyond understanding/ gave birth to Him Who though fleshless,/ became the incarnate to save the world./ With her they intercede for our souls.

Kontakion, Tone 2: Anna rejoices, released from her barrenness,/ and nurses her most pure child./ She calls all people to glorify Him/ Who gave the Virgin Mother to mankind from her womb.

Holy Martyr Nicetas

September 28 (September 15 old calendar).

Nicetas was a Goth by birth, and a disciple of Bishop Theophilus of the Goths, who took part in the First Ecumenical Council. When Athenarik, Prince of the Goths, began to persecute the Christians, St. Nicetas stood before the prince and denounced him for his paganism and inhumanity. The more strongly Nicetas was tormented by terrible tortures, the more strongly Nicetas confessed his faith in Christ, and prayed to God with thanksgiving. His mind was unceasingly lifted up to God and immersed in Him, and in his hand beneath his robe he held an icon of the holy Mother of God with the pre-eternal Christ Child standing and holding the Cross in His hands. St. Nicetas carried this icon because the holy Mother of God had appeared to him and comforted him. Finally, the torturer threw Christ's martyr into the flames, in which St. Nicetas breathed his last; but his body remained untouched by the fire. His friend Marianus took his body from the land of the Goths (Wallachia and Bessarabia) to Cilicia, to the town of Mopsuestia, where he built a church dedicated to St. Nicetas and placed the wonderworking relics of the martyr in it. Nicetas suffered and was glorified in 372.

Troparion, Tone 3

Thou didst defeat error and triumph in martyrdom,/ Nicetas namesake of victory:/ for thou didst conquer the ranks of the enemy/ and end thy contest by fire./ Pray to Christ our God to grant us His great mercy.

Kontakion, Tone 2

Thou didst stand firm and defeat delusion and hast received thy Martyr's crown,/ O Nicetas, namesake of victory;/ thou art rejoicing with the Angels./ Together with them pray unceasingly to Christ our God to save our souls.

Holy Martyr Princess Ludmila

Sept. 29 (Sept. 16 old calendar).

Holy Ludmila was of Serbian princely origin. After marrying prince Borivoi she moved to Czechia, still a pagan country at that time. Understanding the supremacy of the Christian faith the spouses Borivoi and Ludmila got baptized by the prelate Methodius, who enlightened Slavs. They built the first church in Bohemia (Near Prague) and some other churches and also invited priests from Bulgaria to edify their subjects. When prince Borivoi died at the age of 36, he left behind three sons and one daughter.

The widowed Ludmila began giving out her property to the poor and lived a strictly righteous life, which appealed to the Czech people. During all the 33 years of her son Rostislav's (Bratislav) reign, Saint Ludmila was strengthening Christianity in Czechia.

After Rostislav's death the throne was inherited by his 18 year old son Viacheslav who was brought up in the spirit of Christianity by princess Ludmila. Dragomira, Viacheslav's mother tried to revert the Czechs back to paganism and started persecution of Christians. She hated Ludmila, and took advantage of Vacheslav's youth, she began to oppress Ludmila so much that Ludmila had to leave Prague for Techino. Dragomira sent two boyars to Techino ordering them to kill Ludmila. One Saturday night the boyars, assisted by the local miscreants broke into the palace where Saint Ludmila was sleeping and strangled her with a rope. This occurred in the year 928, Ludmila was 61 years of age.

The Holy martyr was buried in Techino near the city wall. Every night since the burial, burning candles started appearing over the place of her burial. A local blind man regained sight when he touched the soil of her grave. Having heard of the wonders that are witnessed at the grave of his Saint grandmother, Prince Viacheslav ordered that the imperishable relics of Saint Ludmila be reburied with ceremonies in Prague and placed in the church of Great Martyr George. Several years later prince Viacheslav also suffered the death of a martyr. (See below).

Holy Ludmila is considered to be a protectress of Czechia, and wonders are still worked by her coffin.

Troparion: O Jesus! Thy lamb Ludmila is calling out in a loud voice: “I love Thee, my bridegroom, seeking Thee I suffer and join Thee in Thy crucifixion and burial to be blessed by you. I am tormented for Thee as I reign in Thy name, and I am dying for Thee as I live with Thee; accept me as a virgin sacrifice made with love to Thee. Through prayers, as Thou art merciful, save our souls.

Troparion, Tone 6

O Ludmila, when godly fear entered thy heart,/ thou didst abandon the glory of the world,/ and hasten to God the Word./ Thou didst take His yoke on thy flesh,/ and shed thy blood in a contest surpassing nature./ O glorious Martyr, entreat Christ our God to grant us His great mercy.

Kontakion, Tone 3

Like a fragrant rose of asceticism/ thou didst breathe forth the myrrh of Christ./ Wherefore He has glorified thee as a righteous martyr, O Ludmila./ Intercede with Him for those who cry:/ Rejoice, noble and blessed Martyr.

Holy Martyrs Vera, Nadezda and Lubov (Faith, Hope and Love), and their mother Sophia

September 30 (September 17 old calendar).

They lived and suffered in Rome in the time of the Emperor Hadrian. The wise Sophia was left a widow and, as a Christian, steeped herself and her daughters in the Christian faith. At the time the Hadrian's persecuting hand stretched out over the virtuous house of Sophia. Vera was twelve, Nadezda ten and Lubov nine. The four of them were brought before the Emperor, with their arms entwined “like a woven wreath,” humbly but firmly confessing their faith in Christ the Lord and refusing to offer sacrifice to the goddess Artemis. At the moment of their passion, the mother urged her valiant daughters to endure to the end, “Your heavenly Lover, Jesus Christ, is eternal health, inexpressible beauty and life eternal. When your bodies are slain by torture, He will clothe you in incorruption and the wounds on your bodies will shine in heaven like the stars.” The torturers inflicted harsh torture on Vera, Nadezda and Lubov one by one. They beat them, stabbed them and threw them into fire and boiling pitch, and finally beheaded them one after the other. Sophia took the dead bodies of her daughters out of the town and buried them, and stayed

by their grave in prayer for three days and nights, then gave her soul to God, hastening to the heavenly company where the blessed souls of her daughters awaited her.

Troparion, Tone 5

Thou didst blossom in the courts of the Lord/ as a fruitful olive tree,/ O holy Martyr Sophia;/ in thy contest thou didst offer to Christ/ the sweet fruit of thy womb,/ Love, Hope and Faith./ With them, intercede for us all.

Kontakion, Tone 1

Faith, Hope and Love, holy branches of noble Sophia,/ by grace made Greek wisdom foolishness./ They have contested and won the Victory/ and have been crowned by Christ the Master of all.

Martyrs prince Michael and boyar Theodore

Oct. 3 (Sept. 20 old calendar).

In the middle of the 13th century great misfortune befell Russia — it was the Mongol invasion. Ryazan and Vladimir princedoms were the first victims of the plunder, then southern Russian cities Pereyaslavl, Chernigov, Kiev and others were devastated. The majority of the population in those princedoms and towns were killed in gory battles; churches were robbed and desecrated, the famous Kiev monastery was destroyed, and the monks were scattered in the forests.

All those terrible calamities were yet an avoidable consequence of invasion of barbarous tribes, who regarded war as just a pretext for plunder. Mongols would generally be impartial to all beliefs. Yasa (a book of taboos) was the code of rules governing their life. One of those rules was to respect and fear any god irrespective of the nation worshipping it. Due to that, The Golden Horde allowed services and practice of various religions without any restriction; and even the khans themselves would often be present at the services of Christian, Muslim, Buddhist and other rituals.

But even though the khans were indifferent and even respectful towards Christianity, they demanded that our princes obeyed some of their supersititious rituals, such as passing through the cleansing fire before an audience with a khan or bowing to the images of deceased khans, the sun and a bush. According to Christian notions, that would be a betrayal of the Holy faith, and some of our princes preferred to die rather than perform those rites. From among those people we should especially remember prince Michael of Chernigov and his boyar Theodore, who suffered a martyrs' death in the Horde in 1246.

When khan Batyi demanded prince Michael to visit and pay his respects to the khan, Michael upon receiving the blessings of his spiritual father bishop Ioann, promised him that he would rather die for Christ and the Holy faith than bow to idols. Boyar Theodore pledged the same. The bishop encouraged them to abide by their holy resoluteness and gave them sacred Gifts and blessed them for the life everlasting. Before Michael and Theodore could enter the headquarters of the khan, Mongol priests demanded that they first bow to the south where the grave of Chinguiz khan was, then to fire and then to felt idols. Michael said, "A Christian should bow to a Creator, not to a beast."

Having learnt about that, Batyi got enraged and told Michael to make his choice: either obey the priests or die. Michael answered that he was ready to bow to the khan as God himself endowed power on him, but that he would not fulfill the demand of the priests. Michael's grandson, prince Boris and Rostov entreated him to save his life and offered that they themselves and his people would accept penance for his sin. Michael paid no heed to their words. He tossed his royal fur coat off his shoulders and said, "I will not destroy my soul, I care not for the glory of the perishable world!" While the reply was being reported to the khan, Michael and his boyar were singing psalms and partaking of the Holy Gifts given to them by the bishop. Soon the murderers were there. They started beating him on his chest with fists and sticks, then turned him face to the ground and stamped him with their feet and finally cut his head off. His last words were, "I am a Christian!" After that his intrepid boyar suffered the same death of a martyr. Their holy relics were preserved in the Moscow Archangel cathedral.

In the beginning of the 14th century (in 1313) khans adopted the Muslim religion, which was always distinguished for its fanaticism and intolerance. Yet as far as the Russians are concerned khans continued to stick to the ancient law of Chinguis khan and traditions of their ancestors. Not only was there no persecution of Christianity in Russia, but the khans even patronized the Russian church. That was due to the contribution of famous princes and clergy of the Russian church, who were lifted up by the Lord during those hard times for Russia.

Troparion, Tone 4

You fulfilled your lives as martyrs,/ were adorned with the crowns of confession and ascended into heaven./ O wise Michael and brave Theodore,/ pray to Christ our God to have mercy on your fatherland/ and on all Orthodox Christians.

Kontakion, Tone 8

Despising earthly dominion thou didst abandon fame as transient./ Thou didst enter the contests and proclaim the Trinity before thy tormentors, strong Michael and brave Theodore./ As you stand before the King of Angels pray for your fatherland and Orthodox Christians,/ that we may ever venerate you.

Faithful Prince Oleg of Briansk

Oct. 3 (Sept. 20 old calendar).

Faithful prince Oleg Romanovich, baptized Leontius, was the prince of the Briansk area and the grandson of prince Michael of Chernigov, killed by Tatars in the Horde (see above). Saint Oleg was disinterested in wealth and worldly glory; he was drawn to monastic life. So he gave up the throne to his brother and took monastic vows and was given the church name of Basil. Saint Oleg became renown for the asceticism of his life. He ended his days peacefully at his monastery in 1289. His relics are preserved in the Peter and Paul monastery built by him in Briansk.

Prelate Dimitry of Rostov

Oct. 4 (Sept. 21 old calendar).

Prelate Dimitry (Daniel Tuptalo in the world) came from the village Makarovo of the Kiev region. He was born into a Kazak family in 1651. He had to give up his studies at the Kiev academy, because of war and finished his education studying by himself. After taking monastic vows at one of the Chernigov monasteries, he was noticed by Archbishop Lazarus Baranovich, who entrusted him to preach in his cathedral. During the next 2 years Saint Dimitry often preached there and became so famous for his eloquence that Lithuania and Malorossia (Ukraine) were competing in having him come and preach there.

When Dimitry was 33 he started his immortal 12-volume work — “Chet’i-Minei” (reader) which described the lives of saints for every day of the year. For 20 years (1684-1704) he had been relentlessly collecting, studying and compiling the lives of saints, which has become since those times a favorite selection for the Russian believers to read. That work was being completed when he was the Rostov Metropolitan (from 1702).

When the valiant prelate became a Metropolitan, he started a struggle against the schism of the church and wrote a detailed study about major schismatic sects under the title of “Inquest of Briansk faith.” Seven years of his arch ministerial service in Rostov were full of his arduous work aimed at strengthening the creed; he was visiting every place of his parish, teaching people and preaching to them. Painfully conscious of the poor enlightenment of his parishioners and priests, he sponsored and organized a school in Rostov, and cared for the disciples there with a fatherly attention and love. They would often gather around him and sing spiritual hymns composed by him. Many of those sublime songs of Prelate Dimitry (“O, my worshiped Jesus,” “Unto the Lord I am crying in my trouble” and others) were sung by people in pre-Revolutionary Russia.

The private life of Prelate Dimitry was an ascetic life of the strictest fasting, prayers and kindness. His food was very simple and always very meager. He was accessible to everyone, always benevolent and lenient. On the 28th of October 1709, the great devotee of learning and piety gave his soul to the Lord peacefully during his prayer in privacy; he was found fallen on his knees before an icon of the Savior. In 1752, his imperishable relics were opened and Prelate Dimitry was ranked among the saints.

In addition to “Chet’I-Minei” and “Inquest of Briansk faith,” Prelate Dimitry wrote a number of sermons and instructions, such as “Concise Catechizes,” “Private Script,” “History of Tsars and Patriarchs,” “The Record of Russian Metropolitans,” and other writings. The works of Prelate Dimitry are permeated with deep faith, warmth and are easy to read, since the Russian language is polished to wonderful legibility and refinement. He was a truly national writer.

Kontakion: Let us please our golden-mouthed teacher Dimitry, who is the star of Russia that rose from Kiev and reaching Rostov through the new city in the north, illuminated the whole country with learning and wonders. He, who described all and instructed us, let him turn us to Christ like Paul and save our souls with righteousness.

Venerable Sergius of Radonezh

July 18 and Oct. 8 (July 5 and Sept. 25 according to church calendar).

In the middle of the 14th century the famous Troitse-Sergievski monastery was established. Its founder, venerable father Sergius (Bartholomew in the world) was a son of Rostov boyars Cyril

and Maria who moved closer to Moscow and settled in the village of Radonezh. At the age of seven Bartholomew was sent to school to learn reading and writing. All of his soul aspired for literacy, but he still had difficulty in learning. Grieving over it, he was praying to God day and night to enable him to open up the doors of book literacy. Once, while looking for horses that had gone astray in the fields, he came across an old monk whom he had never seen before. The monk was praying under an oak tree. The boy came up to him and told him about his woe. Having listened to the boy with sympathy the old man began praying for his enlightenment. Then having produced a small piece of communion bread and blessing the boy with it, he said, "Take it and eat it, this is given to you as a sign of God's grace and for understanding of the Scriptures."

And the boy was truly endowed with God's grace of memory and understanding, and he began to easily learn literacy.

After that miracle young Bartholomew's desire to serve only God became still stronger. He wanted to seclude himself like the ancient ascetics, but his love for his parents kept him in the family. Bartholomew was always modest, he was quiet and reticent; humble and kind with everybody, he never got irritable and obeyed his parents in everything. His usual food would consist of bread and water and he completely abstained from food on fasting days. After his parents died, Bartholomew gave up his inheritance to his younger brother Peter and together with his elder brother Stephan, settled to live in a wild forest near the Konchora river 10 miles away from Radonezh. The Brothers cut wood themselves and built a hut and a little church. The church was blessed in the name of the Holy Trinity by a priest sent by Metropolitan Pheognost.

Thus a famous cloister of Saint Sergius was founded.

Soon Stephan left his brother to become Father Superior of Bogoyavlenski monastery in Moscow and a confessor of the great prince. But Bartholomew, who was baptized Sergius when taking the monastic vows, stayed in the forest alone for about two years. It is hard even to imagine how many temptations the young monk had to go through during that time. Whole packs of wolves would pass by his hut and bears would come too, but none would cause any harm to him. Once the holy anchorite gave some bread to a bear who came to his cell and from that time on the animal began to frequent Venerable Sergius, who shared his last piece of bread with him.

Despite all Saint Sergius's attempts not to attract attention to his life he became famous and other monks were coming to seek salvation under his guidance. They asked Sergius to be ordained their priest and Father Superior. Sergius did not agree for a long time, but then taking their insistence as a sign from above, he said, "I would much rather obey than command, but fearing God's judgment I give myself into the Lord's hands." It took place in the year of 1354, when Prelate Alexei became Metropolitan of Moscow.

The life and work of Venerable Sergius have a special place in the history of Russian monasticism, as it was his cloister that served as an example of secluded ascetic life out of town limits and organized as a community. Starting from scratch the monastery of the Holy Trinity was at first in great need of everything; chasubles were hand painted, sacred chalices were made of wood, they had to burn splinters instead of candles for light in church; but the devotees were zealous. Saint Sergius was a model of asceticism, deepest humbleness and staunch faith in God's help. He was a true leader in work and services and the monks followed his example.

Once the monastery was completely out of bread. Father Superior himself built an entrance-room in the cell of one of the monks in order to earn some loafs of bread. But at the times of sheer destitute, through the prayers of the monks, lavish support was unexpectedly granted to the cloister. In some years after the monastery was founded peasants started coming to settle nearby.

As the monastery was situated not far from a big road to Moscow and further to the North, it started doing better and better. Following the example of the Kiev-Pechora monastery, it began giving alms generously, and provide shelter and support to sick and traveling people.

Saint Sergius became renown as far abroad as Constantinople, and Patriarch Philophius sent him his blessing and a written endorsement that decreed the new rules of community cloister life established by the founder of the Holy Trinity monastery. Metropolitan Alexei loved Venerable Sergius as a friend, he entrusted him important tasks like peacemaking between rancorous princes, and was planning to make him his successor. But Sergius declined this honorable offer.

One day Metropolitan Alexei decided to award Sergius with a gold cross for his work and devotion, but Sergius said, “Since my youth I have never decorating myself with gold, the more so in my old age I wish to remain poor,” and he resolutely refused the award.

Great prince Dimitry Ivanovich, called Donskoi (of the Don river), who revered Venerable Sergius as his father, asked for his blessing to struggle against Mamai, a Tatar khan. “Go fearlessly, prince, and believe in God’s help,” — said the Holy old man and delegated his two monks to accompany and help him. They were Peresvet and Oslabia, who died as heroes in the battle of the Kulikov field.

Even in his lifetime Venerable Sergius was working wonders and had the blessing of great revelations. One day he had a vision of Mother of God appearing to him majestically together with the Apostles Peter and John and promising to keep his monastery in her benefaction. Another time he saw wonderful light and a multitude of birds filling the air with beautiful singing, and he had a revelation that his monastery would host many monks. Thirty years after his blessed repose, his imperishable relics were opened (September 25, 1392).

The Troitse-Sergievski monastery gave rise to many new monasteries. It spread the network of cloisters covering the whole of the northern part of Russia and linking it to the clerical and administrative centre of the country — to Moscow. Before St. Sergius’s repose the following monasteries had been built by him and with his assistance: Kirzhachski monastery (near the Kirzhack river in the Vladimir county), Golutvin monastery (in Kolomna), Simon monastery (in Moscow), Visotski monastery (near Serpukhov), Borisoglebski monastery (near Rostov), Dubenski monastery (in honor of the Kulikov battle), Pokrovski monastery (near Borovsk), Avraamiev monastery (near Chukhloma). After venerable Sergius entered into rest, his disciples founded some other monasteries, such as Savvin-Storozhevski monastery (near Zvenigorod), Zheleznoborski monastery (near Galich), Voskresenski (on the Obnora river in the north of the Jaroslav county), Pherapontov monastery, Kirillov-Belozerski and others. Saint Stephan, the elucidator of the Perm region, was one of saint Sergius’s friends.

Troparion, Tone 4

Champion of virtue and warrior of Christ,/ thou didst contend against earthly passions;/ thou wast a model to thy disciples in vigil, chant and fasting/ and the Holy Spirit came and dwelt in thee./ As thou hast boldness towards the Trinity remember thy flock/ and visit thy children as thou didst promise,/ O holy Father Sergius.

Kontakion, Tone 8

Wounded with love for Christ and eagerly following Him,/ thou didst spurn all carnal desire and shine as the sun on thy fatherland./ Christ has given thee the gift of wonderworking./ Remember us who honor thy memory and cry: Rejoice, Sergius our holy Father.

Faithful prince Viacheslav

Oct. 12 (Sept. 28 old calendar).

Faithful Viacheslav (also called Vincheslav, or Vatzlav), the prince Checkia, was a grandson of saint princess Ludmila (see above), who brought him up in Christian faith. Having received excellent teaching from Presbyter Paul - a disciple of Prelate Methodius, Saint Viacheslav had a command of Slavic, Latin and Greek languages and was a comprehensively educated man. His father, prince Rostislav, (Bratislav), died in 920 in a battle against Ugrians and Viacheslav, who was 18 at the time, became the prince.

He was a wise and just ruler caring about Christian enlightenment of his people. Buying out pagan children from slave owners, he placed them with those who would bring them up in the spirit of Christianity. Prince Viacheslav was peaceful, revered clergymen and beautified the churches. He did a lot for strengthening Christianity among the Check people. He transferred the relics of Saint Vit to the capital of Checkia — Prague, built a magnificent cathedral named in his honor and preserved his relics there.

The German clergy, who were earlier persecuting Prelate Methodius, also created obstruction to Saint Viacheslav and instigated envious grandees against him. The latter plotted against Viacheslav, having persuaded his younger brother Boleslav to replace him on the throne. In order to get rid of Viacheslav, Boleslav invited him to attend the ceremony of blessing a church. Viacheslav refused to believe his servants, who had tried to warn him about the conspiracy. He went to church for the matins and was killed by his brother and his accomplices on the threshold of the church. This happened in 935. The mangled body of Saint Viacheslav remained lying unburied for several days and that caused people's wrath and unrest. When Viacheslav's mother learned about her son's death she buried him in the royal church. The blood which was shed on the church-porch could not be washed away for a long time. Once a prince Boleslav tried to eradicate Christianity in Checkia and to make it catholic. He insisted on serving liturgy only in Latin. Under the pressure of the people, who regarded Viacheslav as a martyr, Boleslav apparently repented his fratricide and transferred Viacheslav's relics to Prague and buried them in the church of Saint Vit. Martyr Viacheslav together with princess Ludmila are considered to be Checkia's protectors.

Troparion, Tone 4

O trophy-bearer Prince Vatslav,/ by thy strategy thou wast a general of the heavenly King;/ armed with the weapons of faith/ thou didst annihilate hordes of demons and win the Athletes' contest./ With faith we call thee blessed.

Kontakion, Tone 2

With the Word of God as a spear in thy hand,/ armed with faith and courage of soul,/ thou didst vanquish the enemy, Vatslav prince of martyrs./ With them pray to Christ our God for us all.

King Wenceslas (Wenceslaus)

October 11 (September 28 old calendar)



Thanks to the popular carol, “Good King Wenceslas,” we have traditionally come to associate this saintly monarch with Nativity; the 19th century English verses relate an incident which took place “on the feast of Stephen,” celebrated by the Church on December 27. If the incident is legendary, the hero most certainly is not. Outside of his native Czechoslovakia, however, few know the true story of this young Orthodox royal martyr, whose statue today dominates one of the principal squares in his nation's capital.

During the missionary journeys of Saints Cyril and Methodius, the Czech Prince Borivoy and his wife Ludmilla were converted. But their baptism was by no means followed by that of their subjects. Many powerful Czechs were opposed to the introduction of Christianity, as it threatened the privileges and powers of their own idolatrous religion.

The son of Borivoy and Ludmilla, Prince Vratislav, married a nominally Christian woman, Drahomira, the daughter of a pagan tribal chief, who held tenaciously to the ancient beliefs. Their first son Vaclavor, as we know him, Wenceslas, [in Russian, Vyacheslav] was born near Prague in 907, and his father began his rule of Czechia in 915. Four daughters and another son, Boleslas, were also born to them.

When Wenceslas was thirteen, his father was killed in a battle. Drahomira took advantage of the confusion and religious animosity to garner the support of the powerful pagan nobility while Wenceslas awaited his majority. During that time, Grandmother Ludmilla arranged to bring up the boy; carefully she formed in his heart the love of Christ and His holy Church with the help of her priest, himself a disciple of St. Methodius. After Vratislav's death those same nobles encouraged Drahomira's jealousy of St. Ludmilla by sly suggestions. “Just look at what this interfering woman has accomplished: your own son is now better fit for a monastery than a throne,” Between them they conceived and executed a plan to eliminate the Grandmother's gentle influence. They had her strangled [commemorated as a martyr by the Church on Sept. 16].

Feeling herself now exempt from all Christian duty, the mother reclaimed her son, including him in her idolatrous ceremonies. Secretly, however, Wenceslas continued to celebrate his Christian faith in private services, receiving the Holy Mysteries in the deep of night. His own crops of wheat and wine were contributed for their preparation. Soon, God saw fit to bring the goodness of the young Prince to light, at the same time rewarding Drahomira in kind for her evil accomplishment. Murder, even by a regent, was severely punishable, and an uprising deposed and banished her. Gaining the throne shortly at the age of eighteen, Wenceslas recalled his mother to the castle, heeding the commandment to honor one's father and mother.

His was a well-formed soul and he cherished the peace and safety of his subjects sacrificially: once, to stop continuous murderous raids by his most pernicious enemy, he volunteered to meet him in hand-to-hand combat and let the outcome be the end of the dispute. Ever steadfast in the Faith, he was zealous in good deeds — clothing the naked, giving shelter to pilgrims, and buying freedom for those sold into slavery. His generous love extended to rich and poor alike. To encourage the Christians he undertook the planning and building of churches and was dauntless in his opposition of the nobles who oppressed them. The troubles between the Christian Prince and his pagan nobility were soon to erupt again in earnest.

In addition to his Holy Faith, the nobles resented his friendship with King Henry I, “the Fowler,” of Germany. Prince Wenceslas preferred to be ruled by the “suzerainty of the empire,” believing King Henry to be the rightful heir of Charlemagne, than to see his country crushed by the Germans if he rejected their rule. King Henry in turn admired the Czech Prince's devotion to

the Church, offering to give whatever he might have of interest to the Prince. Wenceslas requested a relic of St. Vitus. Upon receiving it he built a church (now a cathedral) to shelter. The Bohemian nationalists were irritated by this friendship, and chafed at the influence of clergy in their Prince's counsels.

Although Wenceslas was reconciled to his mother, his younger brother Boleslas now began to be troublesome. Having grown up with his mother rather than St. Ludmilla, Boleslas had been more strongly influenced by pagan ideas. Now he fell easy prey to the evil suggestions of the same rebels among the nobility as had encouraged Drahomira to murder her mother-in-law. This wicked band used the occasion of the birth of Wenceslas' first son to stir up jealousy in Boleslas, hissing that should he not act quickly he would lose forever his opportunity for succession to the throne. Some say that the fire of this jealousy was fueled by the lie that Wenceslas was already plotting the murder of Boleslas. In any case, the band of Judases made haste to rise up against their lord.

Knowing the religious fervor of his brother, Boleslas invited him to the feast of Ss. Cosmas and Damian. Though warned of danger, Wenceslas put his trust in God and went, as his custom was, to the church dedicated to the feast at hand — the castle chapel of Boleslas.

After Liturgy the Prince prepared to return home. But his scheming brother dissuaded him: "Why leave, brother? Let us join my knights for a hearty drink!" Still trusting in God, Wenceslas joined the men and stayed the day. At some point he was probably told of his brother's intent. But either he did not believe the wickedness of it or he determined to rest in the will of God. That night as he slept, the shameless brother and his band of infidels charted their course. When bells for matins awoke him, Wenceslas gave thanks for his life and health and started for church. Boleslas caught up with him at the gate and they exchanged a few words. Then Boleslas drew his sword. "What has gotten into you, my brother?" cried Wenceslas. One of the henchmen wounded his right arm, and the near-martyr ran for the church. There on the Steps of the holy refuge he was beaten to death by two others; then a fourth pierced his side. Strangely, his blood did not yet sink into the ground. A priest covered his body with a cloth, and his mother was told. One can only faintly imagine the chaotic mixture of grief, terror and remorse that assailed Drahomira then. She ran, crying, to the body of her first-born, gathered him to her, and took him to the priest's house to wash and dress for burial. Then, fearing the duplicity of her younger son, She ran away to Croatia.

Three days after the murder, the blood of the holy martyr gathered itself together and stood above his body in the church in full view of many of the faithful. After his burial, many of his grateful subjects, feeling themselves orphaned, went to his grave to pray. Sources agree that miracles soon began in answer to these prayers, although they differ on the reason for Boleslas's decision to move the body to the church containing the relics of St. Vitus: some say the murderer feared reprisals from the faithful and hoped to hide the miracles behind St. Vitus's name; but others say that he repented of the killing of his Prince and brother, and moved the body to honor St. Wenceslas.

In any event, St. Wenceslas was embraced by the hearts of his subjects as their Patron, and his grave became a popular and fruitful place of pilgrimage. Of the many miracles wrought before the Saint's tomb, we cannot pass over the following:

A certain pagan, who was imprisoned, made a promise to the Lord, saying: "if the Lord helps me for the sake of the good deeds of blessed Wenceslas, I will believe in Christ and give my son into His service." Straightway all of his shackles fell from him. Again and again the

guards fastened him down, and again as before his shackles fell from him. Thus he was released and, fulfilling his vow, he studied and was baptized in the Faith, and lived for many more years.

There was in the city a poor woman who was blind and crippled. She went into the church, fell on the ground before the grave of blessed Wenceslas, and prayed until she regained her sight and the use of her arms.

In the Frankish territory there was a certain lame man. He saw in a dream a man dressed in white who woke him, saying: "Rise and go to the city of Prague to the church of St. Vitus; there you will regain your health." When he ignored this, the same man again came to him in a dream and said: "Why did you not carry out my order?" The lame man answered: "I am going, Lord," and he got up and went limping to some merchants and paid them to take him on their cart to the above-mentioned church. There he began to pray and fell on the ground before all present; and by God's grace his knees, ankles, and feet were healed. He rose and gave thanks to God and blessed Wenceslas, for the sake of whose good deeds it pleased the Lord God to help him.

Through the tender-hearted prayers of St. Wenceslas, this young father of many, O Christ our God, release us from our shackles of sin, heal our souls, and save us!

Prelate Michael of Kiev

Oct. 13 and June 28 (old calendar Sept. 30 and June 15).

After being baptized in Korsun (Hersones) in 988, Great Prince Vladimir invited Bulgarian and Greek priests to promote Orthodox faith in Russia. The Constantinople Patriarch Nicholas the 2nd also known as Chrisoverg, sent Metropolitan Michael and many other priests and clergymen to Kiev. Prelate Michael was apparently a Bulagrian. He brought icons, books for church services in Slavonic language, church furnishings and Saints' relics with him to Kiev. After baptizing the 12 sons of Prince Vladimir and the people of Kiev who came to the Dniepr River, Prelate began his work aimed at eradication of pagan superstitions.

Many churches were built and several monasteries founded during the years of Prelate Michael's work in Russia. The biggest of the churches built in Kiev is the one built in the name of our most Holy Mother of God. It was called Desiatinny (one tenth's) as Saint Vladimir was allocating one tenth of his income to run the church. The coffin with great princess Olga was transferred to that church. There were Orthodox churches also built in Pereyaslavl, Chernigov, Belgorod, Vladimir-of-Volyn, Novgorod, Rostov the great and other towns.

A historian of those times wrote that under Saint Michael "the Orthodox faith flourished and radiated light like the sun." Prelate Michael was exceptionally modest, humble and unceasingly hard working; he was a true father of his parish. He was a wise and strict hierarch. He appointed presbyters and chose experienced tutors to educate and bring children up in the fear of God and the spirit of virtue. While he was a Metropolitan four Bulgarian princes and one Pecheneg khan adopted Christianity and were baptized. We also know that he sent the monk named Mark to preach Christianity to Moslem Bulgarians living along the Volga River. Metropolitan Michael entered into rest in 992. His body was buried in the Desiatinnaya church. In the synodic books of the St. Sofia churches in Kiev and Novgorod he is called "The First Head" of the Russian church.

Troparion, Tone 4

The prophecy of the first-called Apostle has been fulfilled today:/ grace has illumined these hills,/ the faith is increased,/ and those who were not a people are now the people of God, a holy nation,/ a flock of Christ of which thou, O Michael, art first shepherd,/ and thou dost serve it by giving it baptism./ O Hierarch standing before God, pray that all may be saved.

Kontakion, Tone 2

Thou didst appear as a second Moses/ bringing the vine from Egyptian idolatry into the land of promise./ And thou didst say of it: Faith shall be established in this land,/ and fruit to nourish the world shall flourish on the summits of Kiev/ more than on the heights of Lebanon./ Having this fruit we bless thee,/ O Hierarch Michael.

Venerable Roman the Melodist

Oct. 14 (Oct 1 church calendar).

Venerable Roman, called “the Melodist,” was a Greek by origin; he was born in the middle of the 5th century in the Syrian town of Emesa. Upon graduation from school he became the dean of the church of Resurrection in Beirut. When Emperor Anasthadius Dikor (495-518) came to power, Roman moved to Constantinople to become a cleric at the St. Sofia church of the Patriarch. He was tirelessly assisting the church services despite the fact that he was endowed with neither vocal talent, nor musical ear. And still Patriarch Euphimi^{us} cared for Roman and even drew him closer to himself, appreciating Roman’s sincere faith and virtuous life.

Patriarch’s sympathy to Roman invoked jealousy in some of the church’s clerics and they started to harass Roman. During one of the pre-Christmas services these clerics pushed Roman forward on to the ambo and made him sing. The church was full of believers, the service was being carried out by the Patriarch himself and attended by the Emperor and his court people. Embarrassed and scared, Saint Roman was singing incoherently with his trembling voice and got disgraced in front of the entire parish. Back at home and completely depressed, Saint Roman prayed arduously and very long that night in front of the icon of the Mother of God, pouring out his grief to her. Mother of God appeared to him, gave him a paper scroll and told him to eat it. A miracle happened: Roman was endowed with a beautiful melodic voice and a poetic talent too. In a spell of inspiration he created his famous kontakion to the Christmas feast: “Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable one; Angels with shepherds glorify Him and the magi journey with the star: since for our sake the eternal God was born as a little child. (Kontakion is a short prayer expressing the essence of the feast).

On the next day, Saint Roman came to the church for the vigil before Christmas. He insisted to be permitted to sing on the ambo and this time he sang his hymn “Today the Virgin...” so beautifully that all people were exalted. The Emperor and the Patriarch thanked Saint Roman, and people called him Melodist. From that time on, Saint Roman beautified the services with his wonderful singing and ardent prayers.

Loved by everyone, Saint Roman became a teacher of singing at Constantinople and contributed a lot to making Orthodox services still more beautiful. His poetic talent gained him an honorable place among the church composers. He is believed to be the author of over a thousand prayers and hymns devoted to various feasts. His most famous prayer is the akathist to the An-

nunciation of Theotokos which is sung on the 5th Saturday of the Great Lent. It became a model for other akathists. Holy Roman died in 556.

Troparion, Tone 4

Thou didst gladden Christ's Church by thy melodies/ like an inspired heavenly trumpet./ For thou wast enlightened by the Mother of God/ and didst shine on the world as God's poet./ We lovingly honor thee, O righteous Romanus.

Kontakion, Tone 8

From thy childhood divine virtues and gifts of the Spirit were bestowed on thee, O wise Romanus./ Thou wast a precious adornment of the Church with thy beautiful chanting, O blessed one./ We entreat thee to grant us thy divine gift that we may cry to thee:/ Rejoice, O most blessed Father, comeliness of the Church.

Andrew, Fool-for-Christ-sake

October 15 (Oct.2 old calendar).

A rich man named Theognostus, was serving as a bodyguard in Constantinople under the Emperor Leo the Great (886-912). Among his slaves there was Andrew, a Slav by birth. He was a calm and kindhearted young man. Theognostus liked him and took care of his education. Andrew frequented the church of God, studied the Scriptures diligently and liked to read the lives of Saints. Gradually the desire to devote himself totally to God grew stronger in him and following a sign from above he took upon himself a very difficult and unusual ascetic feat of fool-for-Christ, that is he started acting as if he was insane.

Acting insane, Andrew was brought to the Saint Anastasia church to be taken care of. Saint martyr Anastasia appeared to him in a dream and encouraged him to continue his ascetic feat. So Andrew was faking madness to the extent that he was regarded hopelessly insane and they drove him away from the territory of the church. After that Saint Andrew lived in the streets of the capital going around hungry and half-naked. Most people shunned him, some would mock and beat him up. Even the beggars to whom he gave his last coins would despise him. But Saint Andrew endured all his sufferings humbly and was praying for those who hurt him.

Yet, it was not always that Andrew pretended to be insane; talking to his spiritual father or to his disciple — a wealthy young man Epiphanius — Saint Andrew would remove the mask of folly, and then his holy wisdom and extraordinary spiritual beauty would be revealed. For the life of deepest humbleness and spiritual purity, God endowed Saint Andrew with the gifts of discernment and prophecy. Epiphanius learned a lot from his saint fool-for-Christ teacher who also predicted that with time Epiphanius would become an Archbishop and a famous preacher. The prophecy came true.

Once Saint Andrew, like the Supreme Apostle Paul, was taken to the third heaven and heard the unspoken words there that cannot be heard by people (1 Cor. 2:9). There he had the honor of seeing Lord Jesus Christ himself, angels and many Holy Saints, yet he was surprised not to see the Most Holy Virgin. He asked where She was and they told him that She went down to the world of many sufferings to help people and to console those in sorrow.

Some time later Saint Andrew was also blessed with the vision of Most Holy Theotokos in the Vlahern church of Constantinople. This significant event of Her appearance is commemorated during the feast of the Protection of Holy Theotokos. When Saint Andrew and Epiphanius

were praying in church, all of a sudden the dome of the church seemed to be opened and Saint Andrew saw the Holy Virgin surrounded by many angels and Saints. She was praying and extending Her omophorion over those in prayer. “Do you see the Sovereign Lady of all?” — Andrew asked his disciple as if he could not believe his eyes. “I do, holy father and I am awed” — said Epiphanius.

Andrew, the fool-for-Christ, went into rest at the age of 66 in the year 936. His life was described by the presbyter of Saint Sofia church, who was a spiritual father to Saint Andrew and his disciple Epiphanius.

Troparion, Tone 4

Thou didst choose foolishness for the sake of Christ/ and didst make the crafty one foolish./
Thou didst persevere with thy struggle in the midst of turmoil,/ and Christ has brought thee to
paradise./ Intercede with Him, O Andrew for those who honor thee.

Another Troparion, Tone 1

For thy sake, O Christ, thy servant Andrew became a fool on earth./ He heard the Apostle
Paul proclaiming,/ ‘We are fools for the sake of Christ’./ As we now honor his memory we pray
thee to save our souls.

Kontakion, Tone 1

Thou didst finish thy life in piety, O godly-minded Andrew,/ Thou wast a pure vessel of the
Trinity and a companion of the Angels./ May peace and forgiveness be granted, through thine
intercession,/ to those who honor thee.

Another Kontakion, Tone 4

Of thine own free will thou didst become a Fool, O Andrew,/ and utterly hate the lures of
this world./ Thou didst deaden carnal wisdom through hunger and thirst,/ through heat and bitter
frost./ By never avoiding the hardships of weather thou didst purify thyself as gold in the fur-
nace.

Saint Pelagia

(October 21, October 8 old calendar).

A repentant sinner, Saint Pelagia was born a pagan in Antioch and endowed by God with great physical beauty, but she used this beauty to destroy her own soul and those of others, acquiring great wealth from her prostitution. One day, walking past the church of the holy martyr Julian, where Bishop Nonnus was preaching, she turned into the church and listened to the sermon, which was about the Dreadful Judgment and the punishment of sinners. These words so shook her, and wrought so great a change in her, that she was suddenly filled with self-loathing and fear of God. Repenting all of her filthy sins, she fell down before St. Nonnus, begging him to baptize her, “Holy father, be merciful to me, a sinner; baptize me, and teach me repentance. I am a sea of iniquity, an abyss of destruction, a net and weapon of the devil.” Thus this penitent implored Christ’s hierarch with tears. And he baptized her. Blessed Romana, a deaconess of that church, stood sponsor to her at her baptism and, after that, as her spiritual mother, grounded her well in the Christian faith. But Pelagia was not content just to be baptized. Feeling the weight of her

many sins and the pricking of her conscience, she decided on a great ascesis. She gave away to the poor the enormous wealth she had amassed by her immorality and went secretly to Jerusalem, where, under a man's name as the monk Pelagius, she shut herself in a cell on the Mount of Olives and there began a strict ascesis of fasting, prayer and vigils. Three years later, St. Nonnus's deacon, James, visited her and found her still alive, but when he went to her again a few days later, he found her dead body and gave it burial. St. Pelagia entered into rest in about 461. Thus, that sometime great sinner, by repentance and striving, received the mercy of God, the forgiveness of her sins and sanctification, and her purified and sanctified soul was made worthy of the Kingdom of God.

Troparion, Tone 4

Like a fragrant rose growing from thorns/ thou wast shown to the Church through thy virtuous deeds/ and wast a source of joy for the faithful./ Thou didst offer thy life in sweet-smelling fragrance to Him Who made thee wonderful./ Entreat Him to save us from every passion, O righteous Pelagia.

Kontakion, Tone 2

Thou didst wear out thy body with fasts, vigils and prayers/ and pray thy Creator for total forgiveness./ This thou didst obtain/ and dost show us the way to repentance,/ O holy Mother Pelagia.

Saint Thaisia

(October 21, October 8 old calendar).

A repentant sinner, St. Thaisia was an Egyptian by birth. Like St. Pelagia, St. Thaisia spent her youth in prostitution being set on the way of evil living by her shameless mother. But God the merciful, who desires not that sinners should perish but that they should be saved, found a way in His wonderful providence to save the sinful Thaisia. One of the disciples of St. Antony the Great, Paphnutius the Sindonite, heard of Thaisia, of her sinful life and the spiritual poison with which she was poisoning the souls of many, and he decided, with God's help, to save her. Holy Paphnutius, therefore, dressed himself in ordinary clothes, took a gold piece and went to the town. He found Thaisia and gave her the coin. Thaisia, thinking that the man had given her the gold piece with evil intent, took Paphnutius off to her room. Then Paphnutius opened his blessed lips and denounced Thaisia's sin, calling her to repentance. Thaisia's soul and conscience were roused, and she gave herself to tears of heartfelt repentance. Giving away all her goods to the needy, she went to a monastery of virgins, near to Paphnutius' hermitage, and stayed there for about three years, shut in a cell and living only on bread and water. Just before her death, St. Paphnutius visited her, and made her leave her cell against her will. She quickly fell ill and, after a short illness, gave her purified and sanctified soul to God. St. Paul the Simple, another disciple of St. Antony, saw in a vision in Paradise a most beautiful dwelling prepared for the penitent Thaisia. This holy soul entered into rest about the year 340.

Troparion, Tone 3

Thou didst abandon dark ignorance through knowledge of the Faith,/ O Thaisia, fair handmaid of Christ./ Thou wast refreshed by His dew and didst finish thy contest by fire./ O glorious Martyr,/ entreat Christ our God to grant us His great mercy.

Kontakion, Tone 4

Having escaped the fog of sin,/ and having illumined thy heart with the light of penitence,/ O glorious one,/ thou didst come to Christ and didst offer to Him/ His immaculate and holy Mother as a merciful intercessor./ Hence thou hast found remission for transgressions,/ and with the Angels thou ever rejoicest.

The Holy Martyrs Zinais and Philonilla

(October 24, October 11 old calendar).

The Holy Martyrs Zinais and Philonilla were sisters born in Tarsus, kinswomen of St. Paul the Apostle. As virgins, they scorned the world for the sake of Christ and withdrew to a cave to leave in asceticism. They were skilled in medicine, and helped many of the sick. Philonilla especially, for her great fasting, was made worthy of the gift of wonderworking. But unbelievers fell on them one night and stoned them to death.

Troparion, Tone 1

Sisters in the flesh and united in the Spirit,/ you wrestled with the prince of evil and endured your martyrdom./ Holy and blessed Zinais and Philonilla,/ pray to Christ our God to save our souls.

Kontakion, Tone 3

Bright mirrors of virginity,/ radiant with your martyrdom,/ you fill the Church with light and dispel the darkness of evil,/ Zinais and Philonilla,/ Christ's precious jewels.

Martyrs Cosmas, Damian, Leontius and others

October 17 (Oct.4 old calendar).

Brothers Cosmas and Damian have been venerated since ancient time both in the East and in the West. The twin brothers were born in Arabia in the middle of the 3rd century. Having studied medicine they traveled the towns and villages of Arabia preaching faith and curing people and even animals through Christ's power. They refused to take any payment. Thus many pagans were converted to Christianity.

Under the Emperor Diocletian (284-305) Cosmas and Damian came to the Kili region of Asia Minor, where they were persecuted by the prefect Lisius. They were arrested, tortured for a long time in an attempt to make them renounce Christ and finally beheaded in the year 303. Along with them the Christian brothers Leontius, Anthim and Euthropius died a martyrs death.

Their sacred relics were buried in the Syrian town of Kir, where many were cured through the healing power ensuing from the relics. In gratitude for being healed by Saints Cosmas and

Damian from a serious illness, Emperor Justian (527-565) rebuilt and decorated their church in Constantinople. That church has become a place of pilgrimage for the entire east. As physicians disinterested in profit, Cosmas and Damian are revered as saint patrons of doctors and are depicted on some medical emblems. (We know three pairs of brothers among saints, who were called Cosmas and Damian). Apart from the twin brothers from Arabia described above, there were brothers Cosmas and Damian who lived in Asia Minor and died peacefully in Mesopotamia in the 3rd century. They are commemorated on November 1 according to the church calendar. We also venerate the Roman brothers Cosmas and Damian, who suffered under the Emperor Karin (283-284) and are commemorated on July 1 old calendar.

Troparion, Tone 3

With steadfast heart thou didst finish thy course/ and cast down the wily foe;/ for thou wast clad in the armor of the Cross,/ O blessed Leonty/ thou wast numbered with the Martyr hosts/ and hast attained to eternal glory./ Ever entreat Christ our God to save us who honor thee.

Kontakion, Tone 2

As a living temple of Christ the Lord/ thou didst destroy the ungodly temple,/ and didst build a dwelling in Paradise, O Martyr Leonty,/ by thy steadfast toils in martyrdom.

Holy Father John of the Kronstadt

November 1 and January 2 (October 19 and December 20 old calendar).

Saint John (whose full name is John Il'ich Serguiev) was born on October 19 in a poor family living in the village of Sura in the province of Archangelsk. Fearing that the infant would not live long, his parents had him baptized immediately after birth with the name of John in honor of the Venerable John of the Rylsk, whose day of celebration it was. But the child grew stronger. The family lived in extreme poverty and deprivation, but his parents laid a strong foundation of faith in the boy. He was a peaceful and determined child, who loved nature and church services.

When John turned 9 his father spent his last money to take him to a parochial school in Archangelsk. The difficulties in learning would sometimes make him feel despondent. At such times the boy prayed God for help. Once during one of those hard moments, deep at night when all the scholars were asleep, he got up and started praying, entreating God very fervently. And the Lord heard his prayer; heavenly goodness dawned upon him and according to his description it was "as if a veil blocking his vision dropped off his eyes." He remembered what was told in class and somehow everything became so clear in his mind. From that time on he started doing great progress in his studies. In 1851 John Serguiev graduated from the seminary with merit and entered the St. Petersburg ecclesiastical academy.

The capital did not spoil the young man, he remained as devout and focused as he had been at home. His father died not long after that and in order to support his mother John started working at the office of the academy with a salary of 9 rubles per month. All this money was sent on his mother. In 1855 he graduated from the academy with excellent marks. That same year the

young graduated was ordained by laying of hands and appointed as a priest to the church of Saint Andrew in Kronstadt (not far from St. Petersburg).

From the very first day of his ordination Fr. John devoted himself entirely to serving the Lord and the people. He served the Divine Liturgy every day. He prayed, taught and helped many people. His zeal was amazing. In the beginning and even later, people sometimes criticized him, mocked him and regarded him as an abnormal person.

During the liturgy Fr. John was praying fervently, demandingly and daringly. He never rejected a request to pray from anyone who asked him; a rich person or a poor one, a nobleman or a commoner. And the Lord accepted his prayers. Innumerable wonders would occur, some of them recorded — some not. People from not only Kronstadt, but from St. Petersburg and later from all of Russia and foreign countries started to turn to him.

Hundreds of letters and telegrams were coming to Kronstadt. Father John usually started praying fervently immediately after reading them. Tens of thousands of people would come to him for a prayer and a blessing.

Father John was not a brilliant orator. His speech was simple, clear and heartfelt, it was coming right from his soul, which charmed and inspired his listeners. The sermons were published in separate issues and spread all over Russia in enormous amounts. A collection of Fr. John's works was also published in several big volumes.

Especially popular with the believers was his clerical diary "My Life in Christ." It was a recount of Fr. John's spiritual life, a record of graceful thoughts and feelings, with which he was blessed, according to his own words, "by God's enlightening Spirit in times of deep vigilance and trial of himself especially during a prayer."

Those thoughts and feelings were addressed to the Lord God (in the form of a prayer), or to his "self" (in meditation), or to other people (in the form of teaching). They pertain to various aspects of faith, and being of great moral value, they are a school of spiritual life.

Fr. John was also a scripture teacher. His influence of the students was charismatic. Children loved him. Fr. John was not a dogmatic teacher, he was an inspiring interlocutor. He treated his disciples in a warm and hearty way, often stood up for them, and did not give homework nor fail them at exams, but just spoke to them. And the students for the rest of their lives would remember those conversations. Fr. John had a gift of awakening true faith in the soul of a child. He often read Lives of Saints and the Bible at the lessons, he would also tell them about his ministerial work.

From the first days of his priesthood Fr. John was a very compassionate pastor. He never cast off anyone, visiting when first called the most poor and degraded people. There he prayed, instructed and helped, often giving up the last of what he had, which at first evoke some reproaches from his family. Sometimes on a visit to a poor family struck with destitute and illnesses, he himself would go to a grocer or a drugstore to fetch a doctor.

Later Fr. John was to handle hundreds of thousands of rubles. But he did not count the money; he would take it with one hand and immediately give it away with the other. In addition to such direct charity Fr. John created a special organization rendering assistance. In 1882 a "House of Industriousness" was set up, which had its own church, elementary school for boys and girls, orphanage, polyclinic for visitors, hospital, free public library, people's home which provided shelter for up to 40 thousand people a year, various work shops which provided the poor with some source of income, cheap public cafeteria which gave up to 800 free meals on holidays, and a boarding house for travelers.

On Fr. John's initiative and with his donations a life guard station was built on the bay shore. He built a beautiful church in his native place. It is impossible to enumerate all of the spheres and areas where he reached out caring for people and helping them.

Fr. John reposed at the age of 80 on December 20, 1908. Innumerable crowds joined the burial procession going from Kronstadt to St. Petersburg where he was buried in the Ivanovski monastery which had been founded by him. From all over Russia, believers would come to the place of his repose and requiems were constantly served there.

God blessed Father John of Kronstadt granting him veneration of the whole of Russia for his strong faith, zealous prayers and great love to God and all people.

Troparion, Tone 4

With the Apostles thy message has gone out to the ends of the world,/ and with the Confessors thou didst suffer for Christ;/ thou art like the Hierarchs through thy preaching of the Word;/ with the Righteous thou art radiant with God's grace./ The Lord has exalted thy humility above the heavens/ and given us thy name as a source of miracles./ O wonderworker living in Christ forever,/ have mercy on those in trouble/ and hear us when we call to thee with faith, O our beloved shepherd John.

Troparion, Tone 4

O Wonderworker living in Christ forever,/ with love have mercy on those in danger;/ hear thy children who call upon thee with faith;/ be compassionate to those who hope for aid from thee,/ O Father John of Kronstadt, our beloved shepherd.

Kontakion, Tone 4

Thou wast chosen by God in infancy/ and in childhood received the gift of learning./ Thou wast called to the priesthood in a vision during sleep/ and didst become a wonderful shepherd of Christ's Church./ Pray to Christ our God/ that we may all be with thee in the Kingdom of heaven./ O Father John, namesake of grace.

The Holy Apostle James, the Lord's Brother

November 5 (October 23 old calendar).

He is called 'the Lord's brother' because he was the son of righteous Joseph, the betrothed of the most holy Mother of God. When Joseph was dying, he shared out his goods among his sons and wanted to leave a share to the Lord Jesus, the Son of the most holy Virgin Mary, but his sons opposed this, not reckoning Jesus to be a brother of theirs. James, though, loved Jesus greatly and announced that he would include Him in his share, counting himself to be indeed brother to the Lord. James was, from the first, devoted to the Lord Jesus. According to tradition, he went to Egypt with the most holy Virgin and Joseph when Herod tried to kill the new-born King. As soon as he heard Christ's teaching, he began to live by it. It is said that, during the whole of his life, he ate neither fat nor oil, but lived only on bread and water, and he was chaste to the end of his days. He often kept a vigil of prayer at night. The Lord included him among his Seventy apostles, appearing to him after His glorious Resurrection, as the Apostle Paul testifies (I Cor.

15:7). He was bishop in Jerusalem for thirty years, and governed the Church of God with zeal. On the Lord's instructions, he composed the first Liturgy, which was far too long for later Christians and was shortened by St. Basil and St. John Chrysostom. He brought many Jews and Greeks to the Christian faith, and even unbelieving Jews marveled at his justice, nicknaming him James the Just.

When Ananias became High Priest, he decided, along with the other Jewish elders, to kill James as a preacher of Christ. One day, at Easter, when many people were gathered in Jerusalem, the elders told him to climb up onto a roof and speak against Christ. St. James climbed up there, and began to speak to the people about Christ as the Son of God and the true Messiah, and of His Resurrection and eternal glory in heaven. The infuriated priests and elders cast him down from the roof, and he was badly injured though still alive. A man then ran up and gave him such a vicious blow on the head that his brains spilled out. Thus this glorious apostle of Christ died a martyr's death and entered into the Kingdom of his Lord. James was sixty-three years old when he suffered for Christ.

Troparion, Tone 4

Thou hast received the Gospel as a disciple,/ thou art invincible as a martyr,/ and bold as the Lord's brother,/ thou dost intercede as a hierarch./ O righteous James, pray to Christ our God that He may save our souls.

Kontakion, Tone 4

God the Word, only-begotten of the Father,/ came to us in the last days./ He has made thee first shepherd and teacher of Jerusalem/ and a steward of spiritual mysteries./ we honor thee, O Apostle James.

The Holy and Great Martyr Dimitry

November 8 (October 26 old calendar).

This glorious and wonderworking saint was born in the city of Salonica of well-born and devout parents. Begged of God by these childless parents, Dimitry was their only son and was, because of this, most carefully cherished and educated. His father was the military commander of Salonica, and, when he died, the Emperor made Dimitry commander in his place. In doing this, the Emperor Maximian, an opponent of Christ, particularly recommended him to persecute and exterminate the Christians in Salonica. Dimitry not only disobeyed the Emperor; he openly confessed and preached Christ the Lord in the city. Hearing of this, the Emperor was furious with Dimitry, and at one time, on his way back from a war against the Sarmathians, went to Salonica especially to look into the matter. The Emperor summoned Dimitry and questioned him about his faith. Dimitry proclaimed openly before the Emperor that he was a Christian, and, furthermore, denounced the Emperor's idolatry. The enraged Emperor cast him into prison. Knowing what was awaiting him, Dimitry gave his goods to his faithful servant, Lupus, to give away to the poor, and went off to prison, glad that suffering for Christ was to be his lot. In the prison, an angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, "Peace be with thee, thou sufferer for Christ; be brave and strong!"

After several days, the Emperor sent soldiers to the prison to kill Dimitry. They came upon the saint of God at prayer, and ran him through with their spears. Christians secretly took his body and gave it burial, and there flowed from it a healing myrrh by which many of the sick were healed. A small church was very soon built over his relics. An Illyrian nobleman, Leontius, became sick of an incurable illness. He ran prayerfully up to the relics of St. Dimitry and was completely healed, and in gratitude built a much larger church in place of the old one. The saint appeared to him on two occasions. When the Emperor Justinian wanted to take the saint's relics from Salonica to Constantinople, a spark of fire leapt from the tomb and a voice was heard: "Leave them there, and don't touch!" and thus the relics of St. Dimitry have remained for all time in Salonica. As the defender of Salonica, St. Dimitry has many times appeared and saved the city from calamity, and there is no way of counting his miracles. The Russians regarded St. Dimitry as the protector of Siberia, which was overcome and annexed by Russia on October 26th, 1581.

Troparion, Tone 3

O victorious Dimitry,/ thou wast a protection for the world and an invincible soldier of Christ./ Thou didst inspire Nestor to humble Lyaios./ Intercede with Christ our God to save us.

Kontakion, Tone 2

God has given thee invincible strength, O Dimitry,/ and has dyed the Church with thy blood and kept thy city unharmed,/ for thou art its foundation.

The Holy Martyr Paraskeva

(November 10, October 28 old calendar).

She was born in the city of Iconium of rich and Christ-loving parents. After their death, the maiden Paraskeva began to give her goods away to the poor and needy, all in the name of Christ the Lord. When a persecution arose under Diocletian (284-305), Paraskeva was taken for trial before the governor of that area. When the governor asked her name, she said that she was called a Christian. The governor rebuked her for not giving her ordinary name, but Paraskeva said to him, "I had first to tell you my name in eternal life, and can then give you my name in this transitory life." After flogging her, the governor threw her into prison, where an angel of God appeared to her and, healing her of her wounds, comforted her. She destroyed all the idols in the pagan temple by her prayers. After long and harsh torture, she was beheaded with the sword and entered into eternal life.

Troparion, Tone 3

Strengthened by the Holy Spirit thou didst excel in contest,/ O Paraskeva fragrant with virginity./ Glorified by Christ's grace thou didst water the world with miracles./ O glorious Martyr,/ pray to Christ our God to grant us His great mercy.

Kontakion, Tone 4

The radiant day of thy contest has come on which the Church celebrates thy martyrdom./ She calls on all to cry gladly to thee:/ Rejoice, O Virgin Martyr Paraskeva.

Our Holy Mother, the Martyr Anastasia the Roman

(November 11, October 29 old calendar).

She was born in Rome of well-born parents and left an orphan at the age of three. As an orphan, she was taken into a women's monastery near Rome, where the abbess was one Sophia, a nun of a high level of perfection. After seventeen years, Anastasia was known in the whole neighborhood to the Christians as a great ascetic, and to the pagans as a rare beauty. The pagan administrator of the city, Probus, heard of her and sent soldiers to bring her to him. The good Abbess Sophia counseled Anastasia for two hours on how to keep the Faith, how to resist flattering delusion and how to endure torture. Anastasia said to her, "My heart is ready to suffer for Christ; my soul is ready to die for my beloved Jesus." Brought before the governor, Anastasia openly proclaimed her faith in Christ the Lord and when the governor tried to dissuade her from the Faith, first with promises and then with threats, the holy maiden said to him, "I am ready to die for my Lord, not once but - oh, if it were only possible! - a thousand times." When they stripped her naked, to humiliate her, she cried to the judge, "Whip me and cut at me and beat me; my naked body will be hidden by wounds, and my shame will be covered by my blood!" She was whipped and beaten and cut about. She twice felt a great thirst and asked for water, and a Christian, Cyril, gave her a drink, for which he was blessed by the martyr and beheaded by the pagans. Then her breasts and tongue were cut off, and an angel of God appeared to her and upheld her. She was finally beheaded with the sword outside the city. Blessed Sophia found her body and buried it, and Anastasia was crowned with the wreath of martyrdom under the Emperor Decius (249-251).

Troparion, Tone 4

O holy Virgin Anastasia,/ thou didst redden thy robe of purity/ with the blood of thy martyr's contest./ Thou dost illumine the world with the grace of healing/ and intercede with Christ our God for our souls.

Kontakion, Tone 3

Purified by the streams of thy virginity/ and crowned by the blood of martyrdom,/ thou dost grant healing to those in sickness,/ and salvation to those who lovingly pray to thee./ For Christ has given thee strength which flows to us as a stream of grace,/ O Virgin Martyr Anastasia.

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466 Foothill Blvd, Box 397, La Canada, Ca 91011
Editor: Bishop Alexander (Mileant)