



St Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesaria

Commemorated January 1

Our holy father among the Saints, St Basil, flourished during the reign of Emperor Valens in 364. He spoke out for the orthodox faith in front of him and judged him because he had accepted the erroneous beliefs of Arianism and was maltreating and fighting savagely and ferociously the churches of the orthodox. St. Basil's father was from the Black Sea and his mother from Cappadocia (from a place called Karamania). In speech and learning he surpassed not only the learned men of his time but also the ancient philosophers since, having studied all kinds of knowledge, he defeated and conquered them in all. Moreover, he practiced philosophy and through it he rose to the theory of beings (i.e. in his understanding of things) wherefrom he ascended the throne of prelacy.

When he became bishop he gave many battles for the orthodox faith and with the firmness and courage of his conviction he amazed prefect Modestus. With the orthodox sermons which he wrote he refuted the convictions of the heretics and arranged the order of morals. He taught the ascetic philosophy, he made plain the theory of beings and to cut a long story short he departed to the Lord, after he had guided the logical flock of Christ to salvation through every virtue. St. Basil the Great was tall in appearance, spare and fleshless. His face was dark-skinned in colour, although it was blended with paleness as well. He had a long nose, round eyebrows and the skin over his eyebrows was furrowed. He looked like a man in meditation and watching over himself. His face was wrinkled with a few furrows. He had long cheeks and his temples were hirsute with hairs which were turned round. He seemed to have his hair somewhat cut. He had quite a long beard with mixed hairs, i.e. black together with white ones.

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St Gregory Nazianzen (~390 AD)

Memory celebrated January 1 and 25

St Gregory of Nazianzus, known by the Orthodox Church as St. Gregory the Theologian (?329 - ? 390 AD), was the son of the Bishop of Nazianzus (Cappadocia).

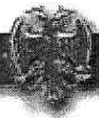
St. Gregory received the best education available, at the University of Athens, where St. Basil, his lifelong friend, and Julian, the future emperor, were fellow-students. In 359 AD he left Athens and became a monk, living a solitary life with St. Basil at Pontus. After two years, St. Gregory returned home to help his aging father manage his diocese. Against his wishes he was ordained a priest and then fled to St. Basil for 10 weeks. He returned to his new duties and wrote an apologia, titled "Defence of the Flight to Pontus", saying that no one can undertake to shepherd the spiritual flock without becoming a temple of the living God, "a habitation of Christ in the Spirit". He also said, "It is necessary first to be purified, then to purify; to be made wise, then to make wise; to become light, then to enlighten; to approach God, then to bring others to Him; to be sanctified, then to sanctify". This treatise became a classic on the nature and duties of the priesthood.

After St. Basil became Archbishop of Caesarea, he had St. Gregory consecrated Bishop of Sasima, but St. Gregory continued to help his father with his duties. Following the death of his father in 374, St. Gregory lived a solitary life in Seleucia until about 380 AD.

After the death of the persecuting emperor Valens, peace returned to the Church, but Constantinople was dominated by Arians. Neighbouring Bishops sent for St. Gregory to restore Constantinople's Christian community. Protesting, he moved to Constantinople, where he preached his famous sermons on the Trinity. His reputation spread and his audience increased, but the Arians attacked him by slander, insults, and violence. He persisted in preaching the faith and doctrine of Nicea (later known as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed). In 381 AD, the Council of Constantinople proclaimed the conclusions of Nicea as authentic Christian doctrine. During the council, St. Gregory was appointed Bishop of Constantinople and installed in the basilica of St Sophia. Opposition to him, however, continued. He resigned for the sake of peace after restoring Orthodoxy in the capital.

He returned to Cappadocia, which was still without a Bishop, where he administered the See until a successor was appointed in c. 384 AD. He then retired to his estates and spent his time reading and writing. His writing included religious poetry (later to become Orthodox hymns), his autobiography, epistles, essays and sermons. He died at Cappadocia.

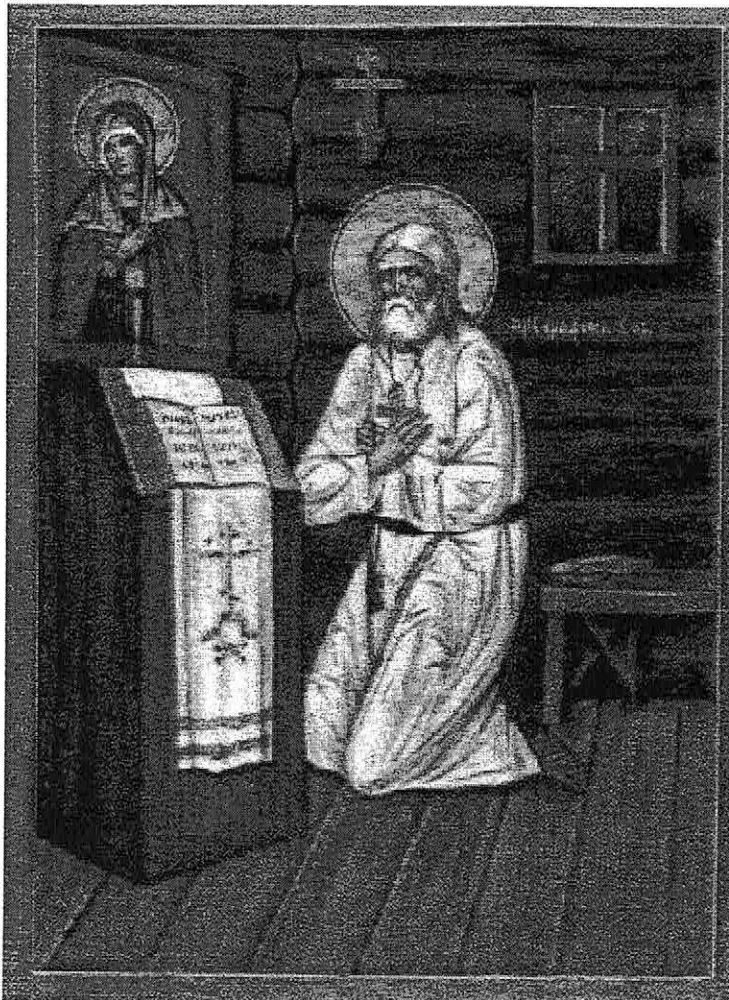
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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

St Seraphim of Sarov

Memory celebrated January 2



A lifelong intimacy with God, and an abiding Christian love for his fellow man, were two of the many attributes of a man of Sarov, Russia, known as Seraphim, who attained sainthood in the eighteenth century, a century in which far fewer saints were selected than in the early centuries when being a Christian meant risking one's life.

A visionary of near divinity and a clergyman of rare compassion, Seraphim's piety was such that he has been linked with Sts. Theodosios and Sergios as the three greatest saints born of Mother Russia. A native of Kursk, Seraphim, who was baptised with the name of Prokhor in 1759, was the son of a devout Christian woman named Agatha and a hard-driving man named Isidore, a successful building contractor. Seraphim's father met an untimely death while in the process of erecting the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kursk, leaving the widow and her ten-year-old son to see to the completion of the church. The boy fell from a scaffolding and recovered from what

appeared to be fatal injuries, after which he revealed that in a vision while he lay stricken the Virgin Mary appeared to him with the message that he would survive. This vision, the first of many intimacies with God he was to experience thereafter, was the inspiration which set him on his lifetime course of service to the Lord.

While yet a boy, Seraphim turned to the Holy Scriptures, impressed particularly by the writings of Sts. Anthony and Pachomios of Egypt, whose monasticism fascinated him, and, after absorbing the teachings in the works of St. Basil, St. Makarios, and St. John of the Ladder, he entered monastic life at the age of eighteen. Tonsured a monk in 1786 and given the name of Seraphim, he was ordained a priest in 1793 but chose not to preach until he had acquired a greater proximity to God, which he thought could come only through prayer and meditation in the complete solitude of the wilderness. The forbidding forest was to be his home for the next several years.

At one point, he broke off his sporadic contact with the monastery and took up residence on a stone slab, on which he is said to have remained for a thousand days and nights in emulation of St. Symeon, removing himself from his uncomfortable roost only for the bare essentials of life. After this, test of spiritual and physical endurance, he sought the comparative comfort of a hut,

from which he would emerge from time to time to tell of his visions, in which he had the company of the apostles Peter and John and occasionally the Virgin Mary.

Returning to the monastery, Seraphim had grown to such spiritual stature that he was visited by countless pilgrims seeking the way of the Lord, and was ultimately designated as the spiritual father of the nuns of the Diveyev Convent, an order which attested to his power of healing through Jesus Christ and offered its prayers to him when he was recognised as a prophet of the Lord and named a holy Starets (Elder of the Faith). It was his firm belief that the Kingdom of God was within us all and that only through the Holy Spirit could come the joy of complete tranquility and the inner peace which comes with faith. His sermons on this particular theme brought the true meaning of God's love to all those privileged to hear him.

Even the animals of the forest came to know the friendship of the gentle Seraphim, and he would on frequent occasions seek out the solitude of the wilderness, returning to the monastery always with renewed faith and closeness to nature that refreshed the spirit. Whenever he became ill, he relied on his "joy," the Virgin Mary, to restore his health. This association with the Divine was to manifest itself many times over.

One of the most notable expressions of the power of healing through Jesus and Mary came about when Seraphim was called upon to help his friend, Nicholas Motovilov, a wealthy benefactor who had been paralyzed by a stroke. The prayers of Seraphim were answered and his friend was healed. The true compassion of Seraphim was shown when he obtained the release of three men who had looted his hut, which they mistakenly thought to contain treasure. He died kneeling in prayer in 1833, and seventy years later was made a Saint.

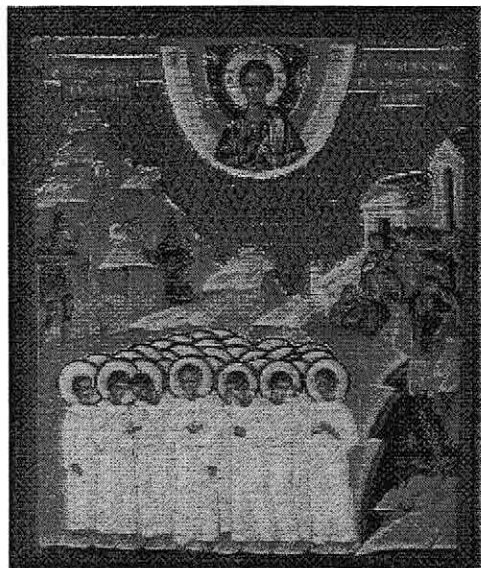
from **Orthodox Saints** Vol 1, by Fr George Poulos
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The Seventy

Commemorated January 4



In Luke 10:1, the Lord appointed seventy men to go out as missionaries - as apostles. Though not so prominent as the Twelve, the Seventy carried out their missions with fervor and enthusiasm.

The Tradition of the Church confirms that the Seventy remained true to the Lord and their calling, fulfilling a vital role in the spread of the gospel. These were not random choices or accidental volunteers but true disciples, true apostles, whose labours carried the message of their Lord throughout the Roman Empire and beyond.

Though lists of the Seventy vary somewhat, all are remembered in the calendar of the Church. One day, January 4, is set aside to remember them all, and the record of their work is preserved in accounts handed down through the centuries from place to place, especially in those locations where they laboured.

To tell the stories passed down in the Church concerning all of the Seventy would fill a book of considerable size, but the compromise of telling the stories of a few, both prominent and relatively obscure members, will relate the conviction and faith of this illustrious body.

Barnabas, a Jew of the tribe of Levi, was born in Cyprus of wealthy parents. He is said to have studied under Gamaliel with Saul of Tarsus, who was to become Paul the Apostle. Originally named Joseph, he was called Barnabas (Son of Consolation) by the apostles (Acts 4:36) because he had a rare gift of comforting the hearts of people. He who sought out Paul when everyone else was afraid of him, bringing him to the apostles. And it was Barnabas who was first sent by the apostles to Antioch to find out what was going on there (Acts 11:22).

Barnabas sought out Paul to work with him, and their long association was broken only when Barnabas was determined to take his cousin Mark, whom Paul did not trust just then, on a missionary journey. The mutual relationships among the three were later healed (Col, 4:10).

Many ancient accounts say Barnabas was the first to preach in Rome and the first in Milan, but he was martyred in Cyprus, then buried by Mark at the western gate of the city of Salamis.

Among the more prominent of the Seventy was the Apostle Titus, whom Paul called his brother (2 Cor. 12:18) and his son (Titus 1:4). Born Crete, Titus was educated in Greek philosophy, but after reading the Prophet Isaiah he began to doubt the value of all he had been taught. Hearing the news of the coming of Jesus Christ, he joined some others from Crete who went to Jerusalem to see for themselves. After hearing Jesus speak and seeing His works, the young Titus joined those who followed.

Baptised by the Apostle Paul, he worked with and served the great apostle to the Gentiles,

traveling with him until Paul sent him to Crete, making him bishop of that city. It is said that he was in Rome at the time of the beheading of St. Paul and that he buried the body of his spiritual father before returning home.

Back in Crete, he converted and baptised many people, governing the Church on that island until he entered into rest at the age of ninety-four.

There are many less prominent among the Seventy who also laboured for Christ unto death, Aristarchus, whom Paul mentions several times (cf. Acts 19:29; Col. 4:10; Philem. 24), calling him a "fellow labourer", became bishop of Apamea in Syria. Sosthenes (Acts 18:17; 1 Cor. 1:1) became bishop of Caesarea, and Tychicus (Acts 20:4; Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:12; Titus 3:12) succeeded him in that city. Simeon (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3), son of Cleopas (who was the brother of Joseph the betrothed of the Virgin Mary), succeeded James as bishop of Jerusalem. Aristobulus (Rom. 16:10), the brother of the Apostle Barnabas, preached the Gospel in Britain and died peacefully there.

The lives of these few are quite representative of the Seventy who were instrumental in helping to plant the Church throughout the world. Many became bishops, but the names of all are numbered in heaven in the Book of Life, as faithful servants of the Lord, apostles and foundations of the Church.


from **The Orthodox Study Bible**
Thomas Nelson Publishers, p.165

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Theophany of Christ our Lord

Celebrated January 6th

 When the Lord Jesus had lived for thirty years from His birth in the flesh, He began His teaching and saving work. He marked this very beginning of the beginning by His Baptism in the Jordan.

St Cyril of Jerusalem says:

"The beginning of the world -- water; the beginning of the Gospel -- the Jordan."

At the Baptism of the Lord in the water, that mystery was revealed to the world that was predicted in the Old Testament and fabled in ancient Egypt and India -- the mystery of the Holy Trinity of God.

The Father revealed Himself to the sense of hearing, the Spirit to the sense of sight and the Son, further beyond these, to the sense of touch.

The Father gave His testimony of the Son, the Son was baptised in the waters and the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, hovered over the waters. And when John the Baptist bore witness of Christ and said:

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29),

and when he immersed the Lord in the Jordan and baptised Him, there were thus revealed both the mission of Christ in the world and the path of our salvation.

That is to say: Christ takes upon Himself the sin of the whole human race. He dies under it (the immersion) and rises again (the coming up out of the water), and we must die to the old, sinful man and rise again, cleansed, renewed and re-born. Here is the Saviour and here is the way of salvation.

The Feast of the Theophany is also called the 'Illuminating', for in the Jordan there is given to us an illumining, revealing God to us as Trinity, consubstantial and undivided. That is one thing. And the other is that each of us baptised in the water is illumined by the Father of lights, through the merits of the Son and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

Synaxis of St. John the Baptist and Forerunner of Christ

Celebrated January 7



On this day we celebrate the Feast of the holy prophet St John the Baptist and Forerunner as well as the coming of his most holy Relic (hand) to Constantinople.

We received from above and from the beginning to celebrate the Feast of the Holy Forerunner and Baptist John one day after Holy Epiphany, i.e. January 7th, because he served at the mystery of the Lord's Baptism.

For this reason this feast is counted with the rest of the Forerunner's feasts so that we should not keep silence over his miraculous and supernatural gifts. It happened that on the evening of Epiphany, the arrival of the holy hand of the Forerunner to Constantinople took place. This happened thus:

St Luke the Evangelist went to the city of Sebaste, in which as they say the holy body of the Forerunner was buried, and, after he had received the right hand of the prophet's body, he brought it to Antioch, his home city, where it performed a lot of miracles. One of these miracles is the following. Just outside the city of Antioch there lurked a dragon who was raised to the level of a god by the Greeks living in Antioch. They honoured him every year with a sacrifice. The worst part of it was that the victim was human. As time passed the lot fell upon a Christian to give his daughter to the dragon. He would come out of his cave dreadful and

horrible to look at and would open his mouth to receive the victim offered to him. Then he would tear her apart with his teeth.

The father of a girl chosen to be a sacrifice was praying with deep sighs and tears to God and the holy Forerunner to free his country from such a bitter killer. As he was praying, he came up with an idea as it often happens with people in need. He was going to attempt such an endeavour. He asked to venerate the holy hand of the Forerunner and, as he was kissing it, he secretly cut with his teeth the thumb. When he got what he wanted he came out of the church. When the day on which his daughter was expected to be sacrificed arrived, all the people of the city gathered to watch the sacrifice. In front of them all the father holding his daughter approached the dragon. When he saw the dragon opening his mouth to devour his daughter, he threw into its throat the holy finger of the Forerunner and, what a miracle! The dragon was immediately killed. When this had happened, the father received his daughter alive and went back home rejoicing and relating the miracle. The gathered crowd of the people seeing this miraculous event were amazed. So, they gave thanks to God and the holy Forerunner and built a great church in his name.

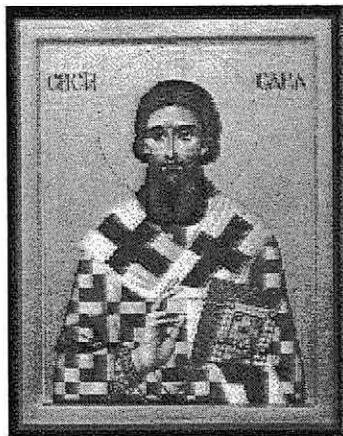
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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

St Sava of Serbia

Memory celebrated January 14 (27)



St Sava at Mount Athos

Rastko, youngest son of the Serbian district judge, STEFAN NEMANJA, was different than his two brothers, Vukan and Stefan, in that he was modest, quiet, retiring and pious; he enjoyed very much to read good books and to meditate in solitude. His brothers on the other hand, like many other sons of aristocrats, preferred a life of recreation and play; liked gentlemanly apparel and good food.

At one time there came to the home of Stefan Nemanja, in Serbia, a group of monks from Mount Athos, who were seeking financial aid for their monasteries. Greatly impressed by their narrations of the beauties of Mount Athos, and of the pious life led by the monks, Rastko ran off with these monks to Mount Athos, where he promptly entered the monastery, and was given the name of SAVA. He lived in the monastery as a most modest monk, praying to God and fasting regularly, but, above all else, he liked to read the holy books and to listen to the instructions of the monks.

After an interim of several years, and at the invitation of Sava, old Stefan Nemanja, who had relinquished his throne to his son, Stefan, came to Mount Athos and entered the monastery as a monk, SIMEON, by name. The devout father and son founded the Serbian Monastery HILANDAR, in Mount Athos, where they then settled, and where, shortly thereafter, St. Simeon died in the arms of his son, St. Sava. The death of his father was beautifully and touchingly described by St. Sava.

The Monastery Hilandar became the fount of Serbian Orthodoxy and Serbian education. Here books were translated and written; icons fashioned, as well as other church articles, thence to be dispatched to every Serbian village and hamlet. To the monastery, too, came many of the youth of Serbian heritage, to be taught and eventually to become priests of the church.

The work of St Sava

With their father now gone, Sava's brothers, Vukan and Stefan, were at strife over the throne, and as a result of their discord, the Serbian State, as well as the Orthodox faith, was gravely threatened with extinction.

In the face of these difficult circumstances, Stefan remembered his youngest brother, Sava, and asked him to return to his homeland and to bring with him the body of their father. Bearing the remains of St. Simeon, St. Sava returned to his country, coming to the Monastery of STUDENITZA, the endowment of Nemanja, and over the remains of their father, effected the reconciliation of his warring brothers.

Following this, he was appointed Superior of the Monastery of Studenitza, instructing and training many of the monks to become Serbian priests and teachers, and in addition, assisting his

brother Stefan, in affairs of state, counselling him wisely at all times.

The Serbian State had progressed to the point of being respected and powerful. Thus, at this time, Stefan, proclaiming himself king and placing the royal crown upon his head, became the first Serbian king, STEFAN, THE FIRST-CROWNED.

There was a need also, that the Serbian Church become independent, for, up to the time of St Sava, the church superior or BISHOPS in the Serbian State, had been Greeks, who, to the Serbs were considered aliens. Realising the necessity for the Serbs to have their own archbishops and bishops, St. Sava, in accord with his brother, King Stefan, departed for the city of NICEA (Asia Minor), where lived the Greek king and PATRIARCH. Sava requested the appointment of a Serbian bishop, which would further strengthen the Orthodox Faith, whereupon the Greek Patriarch elevated St. Sava to the office of the first Serbian ARCHBISHOP. Thus, the INDEPENDENCE OF ARCHBISHOPRIC of the Serbian Church was established in the year of 1219.

Upon his return to Serbia, St. Sava, in agreement with his brother Stefan, divided the Serbian land into bishoprics and appointed Serbs as bishops. For himself he chose as his seat, the endowment of King Stefan, the Monastery of ZITCHA. In this, the Monastery of Zitcha, St. Sava, with great solemnity, crowned his brother as king. Thus, the coronation of the first king of Serbia, Stefan, the First-Crowned, took place in an Orthodox Church, by a Serbian Archbishop. St. Sava worked especially toward the enlightenment of the Serbian people. Numerous churches and monasteries were erected everywhere, throughout the state. Monasteries in that time served as schools, in which the Serbian youth were taught to read and write. Following completion of their learning, they were appointed priests and teachers.

Thus, thanks to the efforts of St. Sava.

St Sava's repose

In his declining years, St. Sava made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, there to visit Christ's grave. Prior to his return, he stopped at TRNOVO, to be the guest of his friend, the Bulgarian emperor. St.

Sava, celebrating the Divine service of Theophany, on a chilly day, caught cold, became ill and died on January 14, (27) in the year of 1235.

The Bulgarian emperor insisted that the body of St. Sava remain in Bulgaria. Consequently, the Serbian king, VLADISLAV, nephew of St. Sava, with great difficulty succeeded in claiming the body of his uncle and interring it in Serbian soil at the Monastery of MILESHEVO, an endowment of St. Sava.

To the Serbs, the grave of St. Sava was most sacred. During the time of Turkish dominance, the Serbs came from all sides to his grave, offering prayers to God, and seeking consolation in their suffering, and strength in their hope for liberation. Realising to what extent the Serbs revered their saint, the Turks disinterred the body of St. Sava from Mileshevo, taking it to BELGRADE at a place called VRACHAR, where on a pyre, his body was burned to ashes, in the year of 1594.

In burning the body of St. Sava, the Turks believed that the people would forget entirely their great benefactor and enlightener, even that his name would be forgotten. But they were wrong !

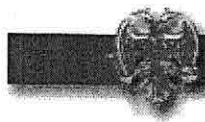
Albeit centuries have passed since the cremation of his remains, there does not exist today, a Serb who is not familiar with his name, nor is there a Serbian school existing which fails to venerate

him every year.

By reason of his meritorious and holy life, Sava was proclaimed a Saint. The Serbian Church celebrates St. Sava as their greatest saint and enlightener. His memory is commemorated by the Orthodox Church on January 14 (27).

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

St Anthony the Great

Memory celebrated January 17

Saint Anthony was born in the year 251 AD in Egypt of very pious parents. His education was limited, however he attended church with his parents and intensely observed the services, wanting to enrich his spiritual growth.

His parents died when he was 18 years old. He lived with his sister and took care of family affairs. One day when he attended the liturgy, he heard the words that Jesus had said to a wealthy young man, "If wilt be perfect, go sell all that thou hast and give it to the poor and come follow me..."

He was so impressed by these words that he decided to do as Christ had told the young man. He sold off his plots of farmland, gave the money to the poor and entrusted his sister to a Christian home for virgins for at this time there were no monasteries. Those who wanted to meditate would build cells a short distance from the city and live there. This is what Anthony did.

In the area lived an old hermit. Anthony followed his example by praying, meditating and fasting in order to overcome the many temptations which are common to young men. He drilled himself by remaining awake days at a time, eating once a day, sometimes once every two days and sleeping on the ground. The philosophy behind his actions was that young men should torture their bodies as much as possible so that their resistance to physical and spiritual sickness would be higher.

The years passed. To further his spiritual struggle, at the age of 35 he departed for the desert where he found a derelict fortress in which he barricaded himself. Completely isolated, but for a good Christian who bought him food every six months or so, he pursued with greater severity his ascetic way of life, constantly battling Satan's temptations.

As the years passed many men came to him, expressing the desire to follow his example by living the life of a hermit and undergoing spiritual struggles. He taught his brothers to prefer their love for Christ over everything else. Even though Saint Anthony lacked education, his words were full of faith and divine wisdom. His reputation and ascetic figure added a heavenly charm to his teachings.

In time this became the first monastery, established in 305 AD. It is for this reason that Saint Anthony is generally known as the Father of Monasticism. From this one brotherhood many more sprouted throughout the known world. Rules were soon established which were to be followed by all hermit monks.

During the time of the persecutions under Emperor Maximianus, Anthony and several other monks travelled to Alexandria to encourage and comfort the many suffering Christians. In 325 AD, Anthony and his monks helped defeat the Arian heretics at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea.

Many miracles are attributed to this religious father. His fame reached even Constantinople. Constantine the Great and one of his sons would write letters to Saint Anthony asking for his

blessing and advice.

Saint Anthony died in 356 AD at the age of 105. He instructed two of his monks to bury him secretly. This they did, and his resting place is still unknown.

by Christina Dedoussis
from **Voice in the Wilderness**
newsletter of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia
Parish of St George, South Brisbane

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St Athanasius the Great (373 AD)

Memory celebrated on January 18 and May 2

St. Athanasius the Great was born of Christian parents and educated in Alexandria's catechetical school. He became deacon and secretary to his bishop Alexander, whom he accompanied to the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. The Council condemned Arianism which denied the eternity of the Word of God and the Divinity of Christ in full. He vigorously defended Orthodoxy and refused all compromise with Arians and semi-Arians, who were, however, strongly represented at the imperial court.

He became bishop in 328 AD at the age of about 30 and made extensive pastoral visits in his province, but was soon the target of bitter attacks by Arians and Meletians. Summoned to the hostile Council of Tyre and appealing to the emperor for fair treatment, he was exiled and then restored, deposed, and then reinstated. Much of his life was spent in exile.

St. Athanasius was a prolific author and strongly contributed to the theology of the Redemption. The theme of his early work (Of the Incarnation of the Word of God) is the restoration of fallen man to the image of God in which he was created, through God the Word's union with mankind. He insisted that the Nicene term Homousios was necessary to formulate correctly the truth of Christ's Scriptural revelation. He was also the biographer of St. Antony of Egypt. This biography was devoted to the single combat of the hermit against the powers of evil. He died beloved and triumphant, on May 15, 373 AD.

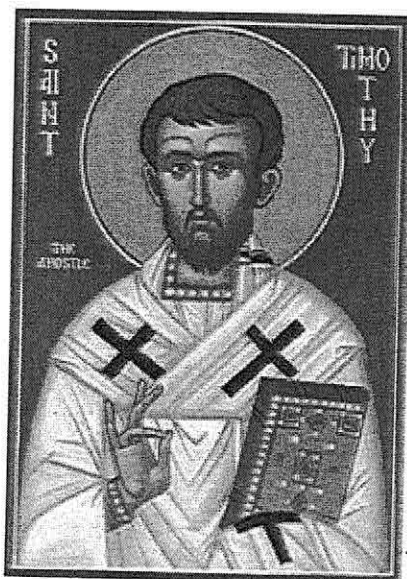
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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

St Timothy

Memory celebrated 22 January



St Timothy was born in Lystra in Lyconia of a pagan Greek father and a Jewish mother named Eunice. His grandmother was a Christian and it was perhaps through her influence and teaching that he came to follow Christ. When the Apostle Paul visited Lystra, the young Timothy was already a full member of the Christian Church and after the two discussed the many difficulties Christianity was facing, the younger man expressed a desire to serve as a missionary, despite its hazards. It was after the departure of Barnabas and Mark that Paul summoned Timothy to accompany him as a colleague in the cause of Christ.

About a quarter of a century after Christ, Timothy and Paul travelled to Europe, accompanied by Silas, in a missionary task of staggering proportion. In most areas theirs was at best a thankless job, but with the zeal born of a profound love of the Saviour, they succeeded in securing a foothold in spiritually darkened corners.

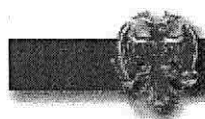
They brought this about with administrative skill in the face of odds which might have discouraged less hardy souls. In a fury of religious oratory, they summoned thousands to the fold and established Churches of God where for centuries people had worshipped mere objects or beasts out of fear and superstition.

When St Paul was summoned to Athens, he commissioned Timothy to carry the word of Christ to Corinth, Thessaloniki, and Phillipi. To these areas Timothy displayed his talents to the fullest in establishing a nucleus of Christian Churches which became the cornerstone from which Christianity has grown to its present day proportions. Timothy made his way to Ephesus where he was established as bishop of the city. A frenzied mob of resentful pagans whom he denounced stoned him to death. St Timothy died a martyr for Christ on January 22 AD 72.

To the man Timothy fell the solemn honour of being the recipient of two letters from the great apostle St Paul entitled First Timothy and Second Timothy.

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by Fr George Poulos, Holy Cross Orthodox Press

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

Venerable Joseph the Sanctified

Commemorated 22 January

By His Grace Bishop Joseph of Arianzos

Our Venerable Father Joseph the Sanctified, surnamed Samakos, was born and raised in Crete. He came into the world a short time before the destruction of Constantinople, around the year 1440, from pious and God fearing parents in a village called Keramoi. Most people believe that Keramoi is today's small village of Azokeramos, which is found at the easternmost end of the province of Siteia that is distinguished even today by the piety of its people.

His good parents brought him up with the pure milk of godliness and educated him with the beginning of wisdom, which is the fear of God. So, from a young age he learnt holy writ and filled his soul with holy zeal running like a thirsty deer to the revered Monastery of Panagia Akroteriane, which is found in the region close to his village and which at that time was in full spiritual bloom. This Patriarchal Stavropegial (under the direct auspices of the Ecumenical Patriarchate) Monastery, exists today, unfortunately more as a tourist attraction than an actual monastery, known since the last years of Turkish occupation as the Monastery of Toplou. Under the protection of the Akroteriane Mistress (the Theotokos), he fed his soul with the solid food of the neptic tradition (ascetic fathers) and learnt to fight the invisible war against the three-headed monster flesh-worldliness-devil. He was initiated into the sweetest secrets of pure prayer and God-loving loquacity, filling his heart with divine love for Christ. When he at last reached a suitable age and with the blessing of his Spiritual Father he left the monastery and went to Handaka (today's Herakleion). This was the Great Castle where there was the small Monastery dedicated to St. John the Theologian, a Metochion (subsidiary) of the Monastery Panagia Akroteriane at Siteia, at an area called Dermata. Today the church of the Holy Trinity stands at that spot. There he put himself under the direction of the Geronda (Spiritual Father or Abbot) of that monastery.

Being next to his holy Geronda and, with blessed in the Holy Spirit obedience, he started the ascetic endeavours and fasting, the hardships and discipline of the body for the taming of the old man (sinful nature), and gradually became a clean and roomy vessel, ready to accommodate the Grace of God. When his pious parents slept in the Lord, he distributed his inheritance to the poor according to the words of the Lord: "If you want to be perfect, go and sell your belongings and give the money to the poor, you will then have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me" (Matt. 19:21). He then bid the world and its pleasures farewell and offered his whole self to Christ, wearing the holy habit of a monk.

With the angelic habit of monasticism, with great and honest struggle and patience he attracted upon himself Divine Grace, which blessed his efforts and tears, and increased in the field of his soul, the flowers and trees of the holy evangelical virtues he cultivated there. Decorated thus with these Christ-imitating virtues he stood apart within the monastic brotherhood and, despite his youthfulness he had arrived at spiritual heights as if he were a white-haired elder. He was, as is said in these circumstances, a paedariogeron or young-elder. All respected and esteemed him seeing his spiritual progress, his virtue and his Godly wisdom and prudence. Therefore, very soon, with the exhortation of his Elder, he received the grace of Priesthood. He put on the holy epitachelion (stole) and was established as a minister and steward of God's Mysteries.

When his affectionate Geronda peacefully passed away, the holy Fr. Joseph executed his duties

and orders to the letter, with every piety and care as a devoted son. At the same time he increased his holy zeal and any talents and charismata he had been given by God and cultivated them with an even more sense of honour and self-respect. He lived his monastic life as a bodiless angel, having in his mind exclusively the thought of how to please the Lord everywhere and always. He pushed himself with hardship, he attended his emotions very carefully, he purified his body, he kept his tongue from any evil words, he prayed unceasingly and always had the memory of death to bridle the human passions and distance the danger of sin. At the same time he honourably cultivated the charisma of the holy Priesthood, pastoring the logical sheep of Christ with love and self-denial, comforting, supporting, advising, teaching, reprimanding, according to circumstance. He especially took utmost care to cultivate love, practising charity and brotherly love.

His priestly conscience was never tainted with the smear of greed and whatever **philotima** (gifts of money) were given to him by the faithful, he distributed to the poor. Indeed not only the money but even the **Prospora** (oblation bread) that were left over from the Liturgy he gave away not keeping even the basic needs for his own sustenance. He was totally poor for Christ, absolutely faithful to the monastic rule of total poverty!

At one time, it is said, he had distributed the Prospora to the poor in advance forgetting to keep one for the Liturgy. When the time came for Liturgy, his helper sadly informed him that there was no Prospora. St. Joseph was not fazed but replied to his helper that God would provide Prospora for the Eucharist, and then started to pray. In this way Abraham had at one time replied to his son Isaac's question in regard to the lamb that was to be sacrificed: "God will provide the sacrificial lamb my child!" (Gen. 21:8). Truly God did provide a ram in a bush called savek, which Abraham sacrificed, instead of Isaac. Similarly now God provides for the Prospora at the bloodless sacrifice by a miracle! The server had barely entered the holy Sanctuary when he found a heap of warm well-baked Prospora ready for the Liturgy! You see, our God, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever!" (Heb. 13:8). Thus He acts accordingly to the petition and the needs of his saints.

The whole life of the humble Hieromonach (Priest-monk) Joseph was Christ-life. His thoughts were Christ- thoughts and his feelings were Christ-feelings. Whatever was his was first Christ's then his, his own soul was Christ's firstly then his. To him everything everywhere was Christ the Lord! In this way his life was the life of Christ extended through him to his times, which is the life of the incarnate God-Word, the Theanthropos (God-man) Jesus, who became man so as to present and offer us, as a man, his divine life (see "Together with all the Saints, Man and God-man", p 80-8 1, by Archimandrite Justin Popovic (+)).

But because Christ said to his followers "you will have affliction in the world" (John 16:33), in other words - the world will make you suffer", venerable Joseph was allowed to be tested. One day some vulgar-mannered Jews from the Great Castle, acting polite and courteous offered him a cup of wine as he passed by their way seemingly to offer hospitality but in reality to mock him. He graciously accepted it, he blessed it with the sign of the cross being a priest, drank a little for love and wished them the best, thanked them and poured the rest back into the container from which it came. They on the other hand considered this blessing of St Joseph an offensive insult. They fell upon him and insulted him in a vulgar and barbarous way dragging him by force to the courthouse of the Duke, where they accused him of insult against their religion. The man of God though, was justified by the impartial judge and his accusers went away, thoroughly ashamed and embarrassed.

Blessed Joseph lived 71 years on this earth. He came, with the power of the Holy Spirit, to be clothed with Christ (through his constant prayer and extensive sacramental life on the one hand, and with the systematic cultivation of the evangelical virtues together with his imitation - according to his ability- of the Lord within the angelic monastic community on the other). He was

filled completely by the Grace of the God-Man Christ and was transfigured gradually into a God-bearing and Godlike human, into a perfect man according to the prototype of Christ (see p. 97 of Justin Popovic's previously referred book). In this kind of condition the calling of the Lord for the eternal life and kingdom found him on the 22nd January 1511. Thus his death was a holy sleep in the Lord. It was a **pascha**, and a passing over from corruption and vanity to immortality and eternity. From this valley of tears, to the place of never ending joy, where the pure sound of those who always feast and have happiness singing with delight the glory to You Lord is found! He passed from the Egypt of death to the Land of Promise (the eternal Life and Kingdom of the All-holy Triadic God).

Many miracles and signs followed the sleep (death) of Hieromonach Joseph. Many persons saw holy visions again and again. Thus a few years later his venerable body was exhumed and was found to be incorrupt and whole, giving off a divine aroma, which gave great joy to those who venerated it. In conjunction to this were many miracles, especially healing of illnesses and sicknesses for many whom approached and venerated in faith and piety. This is indeed proof that God in His great goodness and loving kindness, can be touched or partaken through His uncreated divine energies as the Holy Fathers, divinely inspired, teach us. Because, what else but participation, not only spiritual but physical, in these divine energies, is witnessed by the incorruption, the aroma, and the miracles which are done by the holy relics of the Saint. Glorified, therefore, is the most-praised and worshipful Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit! Which God is great as our God?

When the impious Agarenes, by God's allowance because of our sins, invaded the island of Crete in 1669, a pious priest called Antonios Armakis, intending to protect the holy relics of the Saint from the impure hands of the God hated barbarians, took it with him and escaped to Zakynthos. There he placed it on the 29th of August that year in the Convent of St. John of Mantinea, in the region called Xerovounia (Dry hills). From there, in 1915 it was transferred to the church of the Pantocrator in the suburb Gaitani of Zakynthos City, where it is still treasured today whole and complete. This is where pious people come and venerate the relics and receive spiritual support and divine blessing and where supernatural miracles happen at certain times according to the faith of those who approach.

At the birthplace of the Saint, Azokeramos of Siteia, a domed church was built in his memory, which celebrates its feast on the 22nd January, and many people gather from Siteia and the surrounding towns. I personally, as the former Vicar-General and Preacher of the local Diocese there, was deemed worthy to liturgise on many occasions speaking the praises of the Saint for the glory of God and our spiritual edification and salvation. Also in the newly built tri-naved Basilica of St. George, the southern nave was dedicated to the Venerable Joseph, where the faithful come to be comforted by their Sanctified (as they simply call him) compatriot. In the city of Herakleion, at the parish church of the Holy Trinity, which stands on the spot of the Saint's Monastery, the memory of Venerable Joseph is also celebrated with great solemnity. In Zakynthos they tend to celebrate the placing of his relics there on the 29th of August, when they take, the holy relics in procession through the streets of Gaitani.

May the grace of the Venerable Saint protect both Crete that begot him, Zakynthos that keeps his relics and every faithful and saint loving person, from every want and affliction. Amen.

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St Xeni

Memory celebrated January 24



St Xeni is known to have been born into an upper class family of Rome and to have been baptised with the name of Eusebia. She also has been known to have taken life very seriously, harbouring a piety which went undetected even by her parents, who placed more emphasis on her social training than on her spiritual guidance, despite the fact that they were dedicated members of the Christian faith.

Church attendance for her family was regular and sincere but lacked the intensity felt by the daughter, which escaped the notice of the parents even when she joined them in their many acts of charity, which they could well afford. Considered unsmiling and distant by youngsters who tried to reach her heart, the quite personable and lovely Eusebia endeared herself to the community as a whole who construed her quiet solitude as difference and not the indifference seen by those who sought to probe the inner reaches of her mind which was preoccupied with thoughts of the Saviour.

As she grew into her Saviour however, the comparative isolation which she found from time to time grew more and more elusive as families gathered closer to hers with sons who would have her as a bride. It was the family that arranged nuptials, and she was barely seventeen when a husband was selected for her from among the many eligible young men of Eusebia's social level. She had made a decision for Christ and rather than create any unpleasant scenes which might mark disobedience to her parents' will, she observed that calling she heard to a higher will, and she decided to quietly slip away.

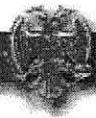
With the assistance of a servant and confidante, she arranged passage on a boat bound for the Holy Land and left unnoticed with some regret that she had to leave her parents in this manner but with high hopes of fulfilling her lofty ambition. Eusebia's first order of business was a visit to the tomb of Jesus Christ where she paused in prayer for divine guidance and for forgiveness for having offended her parents. After several such prayerful visits, she, for reasons known only to her, left the Holy Land to go to the island of Kos in the Aegean where she met a highly respected monk named Paul, who saw at a glance the grace within this gentle creature of God whom he dubbed "Xeni," meaning the stranger, which is what she considered herself, and the name she adopted from there on.

Paul sensed that there were great things in store for this visitor to his island and arranged to have her settle in an isolated hut which afforded her privacy and the solitude she needed for prayer and meditation. She emerged from isolation after a period of time with an aura of the Divine so evident that Paul urged her to make herself known on the island to do what she could for a people that knew little but poverty. She not only brought to these islanders a rare kind of spiritual guidance, but a rarer still power of healing which made her the cynosure of all who came to revere her in life as one sent from heaven.

When her friend and benefactor, the monk Paul, was made bishop of the area, he asked Xenia to become a deaconess of the Church, an invitation which she hesitated to accept until a contingent of islanders prevailed upon her to put aside her doubts and assist the bishop who would in turn assist her in doing God's work. Forewarned in a vision of the imminence of her death, Xenia walked out of the village quietly to her bed and fell asleep in the Lord on January 24. The beam of light that shone brilliantly in her room as she died left no doubt as to her ascent to Heaven.

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

St Gregory the Theologian

Memory celebrated January 25

The fabric of Christendom was woven into its strength and beauty of character by the threads of men such as St. Gregory the Theologian, who became one of the four great doctors of the Church during the 4th century AD, along with Saints Basil the Great, John Chrysostom and Athanasios the Great. He is further remembered as one of the three so-called Cappadocian Fathers, an honour he shares with Sts Basil and Gregory of Nyssa. He is also recognised as the champion of Orthodoxy against the heretical doctrine of Arianism.

The son of a bishop for whom he was named, Gregory was born in Arianzos in Cappadocia, Asia Minor, in 329 AD. He was educated in Caesaria and then in Athens, where he met Basil with whom he became close friends linked in a common resolve to serve Christ. At the suggestion of Basil, the two friends became monastics at a retreat in Pontos, where each embarked on a spiritual journey that was to lead them both to greatness. It was with some degree of reluctance, however, that Gregory left the monastery to be ordained into the priesthood to serve as an assistant to his father, the bishop of Nazianzos. The son's brilliance as a preacher outshone his father's. When barely thirty years old, he won acclaim throughout the region as a mighty warrior in the fight against paganism and heresy.

It was largely through the influence of Gregory that his friend Basil was made bishop of Caesaria. In the process, he himself was made bishop of the relatively unimportant town of Sasima, a post he never sought and in which he never served, preferring to remain with his father in Nazianzos. He took over the church of Nazianzos after the death of his father in 374. With the loss of his father, he had a longing to return to asceticism in some retreat, there to meditate, pray, and interpret the Scriptures. He was allowed to go to the seclusion of Seleucia in Isauria, where his tenure as an eremite was short-lived.

After the death of the Arian Emperor Valens, followed closely by the death of Gregory's friend Basil, Gregory was called to Constantinople. He was to head the reorganisation of the Orthodox Church which had been torn asunder by the heresy of Arianism from within and by the harassment of pagans without. In the course of this holy work, he achieved distinction as an orator, traditionalist, and a crusader that earned him the title of "Theologian" despite the opposition of Maximus the Cynic, who had been set up against him by the bishop of Alexandria.

When the Orthodox Emperor Theodosios came to power in 380 AD, Gregory assumed the direction of the magnificent Church of Aghia Sophia, the most prestigious house of God in all Christendom. While director of this mighty church, Gregory took part in a synod held in Constantinople in 381 AD to settle the differences among the prelates of the Church. Known as the Second Ecumenical Synod, it resolved the issues and voted to accept Gregory as patriarch of Constantinople. It further added its official support to the Nicene doctrine which was championed at the First Synod in Nicaea.

For as long as he held the post of spiritual leader of Orthodoxy the gallant Gregory served with honour and dignity. Moreover, he was the instrument of God in unifying the Church into a cohesive unit that could withstand any internal or external pressure. He grew weary of the personal attacks that are the occupational hazard of a patriarch and after a moving farewell

address, he retired to live out his days in meditation, writing, and prayer. He died 25 January 388 AD.

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

Sts Xenophon, Maria and sons John and Arkadios

Memory celebrated January 26

A tragically splintered family that regrouped after years of involuntary separation to serve Jesus Christ jointly, as they had separately with such dedication as to achieve individual sainthood, comprised one of the proudest families in the era of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian, the monarch generally considered to be most responsible for the magnificent Cathedral of Aghia Sophia of Constantinople. The father of this renowned group was named Xenophon, a well-to-do senator. His wife, Maria, bore him two sons named John and Arkadios, both of whom shared with their parents an intense dedication to the Messiah.

When it was decided that the sons complete their studies in one of the most advanced schools of the empire, they took passage on a ship bound for one of the greater institutions of Beirut, Lebanon. The vessel must have been something less than seaworthy, for in a sudden storm the craft virtually disintegrated in heavy seas. It is not known how many survived, but it is known that both John and Arkadios managed to cling to separate pieces of timber and were parted by mounting swells and swirling currents that eventually placed them miles from each other. John managed to clamber onto a heavy timber which, after several days of drifting, washed ashore near the city of Melphythan, not too far removed from the ancient city of Tyre. Meanwhile, Arkadios was carried to a point of land several miles south of the city of Tyre, there to kneel in prayer of thanksgiving for his deliverance and for the salvation of the soul of his brother, whom he presumed had been lost at sea. Several miles to the north John was offering identical prayers, unaware that, like himself, the life of his brother had been spared.

The battered John, barely alive after his ordeal, was nourished back to health by the monks of a monastery of the desert. They so impressed the devout John that, after fully recovering, he decided he belonged by divine edict in this sanctuary. Turning his back on his past life, he took up the rigorous regimen of monasticism and ultimately proved himself to be a monk in the highest tradition of complete service to Jesus Christ.

Two years elapsed before Arkadios, who had a vision following his recovery that somewhere his brother was alive and well, began a search for his brother. During this search Arkadios also came under the influence of monks and entered a monastery, ultimately demonstrating the same complete dedication to the Saviour as his brother did. As time passed Arkadios doubted his brother's survival, but he never weakened in his faith.

An itinerant monk happened to visit Constantinople where he sought out Xenophon and Maria. The monk suggested to them that the survivor of a shipwreck known to him as Arkadios, whom he had met in the Monastery of St. Savvas of Jerusalem, might be their lost son. Xenophon and Maria immediately set out for the Holy Land, and it was more than mere chance that at about this time their other son, John, decided to visit the Holy Land to pray at the tomb of Jesus Christ. An unseen hand led all four members of the family to the tomb of Christ where they met in tearful but joyful reunion and knelt in prayer together after long months of doubt and misgivings.

After visiting the Garden of Gethsemane for further prayers in praise of the Lord and his blessing

upon them, the family went as a group to the monastery where Arkadios had served, and each told of what had transpired in the intervening years. After many hours of the rapture of reunion the family regained its composure; and following a consultation, they decided that the lives of the parents, as well as the sons, would be given over to the Lord.

Xenophon sent a letter of resignation from the senate and appointed an executor to see that his entire holdings be given to charity. He then undertook to become a monk at an age when most men of his means would have chosen to live out their remaining years in comfort. Maria, willingly chose to follow the example of her husband and sons and with greater joy than she had ever known, entered the service of Christ in a nunnery not far removed from the Monastery of St. Savvas where her husband and sons were to serve. Their names, each of which has been invoked with miraculous results, are remembered on the same day, January 26.

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