



The Archangels

Commemorated November 8



Angels were created as messengers of God. The Scriptures reveal that God created nine orders of angels: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominations, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Archangels, and Angels. Out of this order come the familiar seven Archangels which include Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Raguel, Sariel, and the fallen Lucifer. Before outlining the roles of the two that have been most prominent with man in the divine plan of the universe, it is required to cite him who has been the source of evil in our world with whom others, divine and mortal have had to contend with over the centuries since the dawn of man.

Lucifer, whose ambitions were a distortion of God's plan, is known to us as the fallen angel, with the use of many names, among which are Satan, Belial, Beelzebub and the Devil. An outcast since his expulsion from Paradise, this force of evil has been a thorn in the side of mankind and in all probability

responsible for the miseries which Christianity has been striving to eliminate throughout the world.

The Archangel Michael is the outstanding figure in the eyes of the Greek Orthodox Church and is depicted in the many houses of worship in an icon always on the extreme left where he is pictured as a guardian of Paradise from whence Adam and Eve were evicted. In some icons he is seen with a flaming sword as a symbol of the righteousness that called for the casting out of the Garden of Eden of Adam and Eve after they had fallen victim to Satan in the form of a serpent. Among other things, it was Archangel Michael who was sent by God to countermand the command of God himself that Abraham sacrifice the life of his own son Isaac. Archangel Michael was also the messenger who warned Lot to flee from the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Archangel Michael's involvement with mankind is also seen in other ways, including his protection of Jacob from the wrath of his brother Esau over a matter of inheritance for which there are probate courts today. The Scriptures also tell us that it was Michael who battled the Devil for the soul of Moses following the death of the founder of the Israel nation. The Devil based his claim on the soul of the great Moses on the basis of Moses having killed an Egyptian prior to the Exodus, but the defence of the monumental figure of the Bible by Michael saved the soul of Moses from the clutches of Satan.

We are further told that it was Michael who stood by Joshua during his first encounter with his enemies in the land of Canaan. Mentioned in the New Testament numerous times, in which his lofty position is recognised, accounting for many miracles recounted as being attributed to the handiwork of Michael, chief of which is the changing of the course of a river at a place called Chonais in Asia Minor.

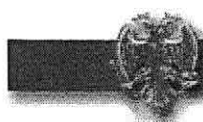
Michael's many miracles are commemorated by the church on September 6 of each calendar year.

A sweep of the eyes to the other end of the icon screen in Greek Orthodox churches falls on the Icon of St. Gabriel, seeming like twin sentinel with Michael over all mankind. Gabriel's name is synonymous with redemption, particularly since he was chosen to be sent by God to bring the electrifying news to the Virgin Mary that she was about to become the mother of God. What ensued changed the course of history and brought the promise of the deliverance of man through Jesus Christ. On the left is the symbol of guilt, on the right the symbol of salvation and between those can be seen the inspiring spiritual greats who have woven an enduring fabric to clothe all mankind and keep him from exposures that are life threatening.

Few are aware of the assignments of the lesser known and not so often mentioned saints, aside from Michael and Gabriel and the fallen one. Scant mention is made of the others but much could be made out of their responsibilities as ordained by God through painstaking study of Scriptures which the average reader overlooks because of what is considered more interesting or engrossing. Gabriel is principally mentioned in the Book of Daniel but there are others who have been mentioned who could do with considerably more attention.

Too little is said of Raguel, who is in charge of the spirits of humans but Sariel, whose duties are not defined whose role as avenger upon the world of lights is somewhat confusing. This brings us down to Sariel, whose duties are not clearly defined. However there is a clear definition of Uriel's role as leader of angelic hosts who guard the underworld (Sheol). Together this holy group is honoured with a feast day on November 8.

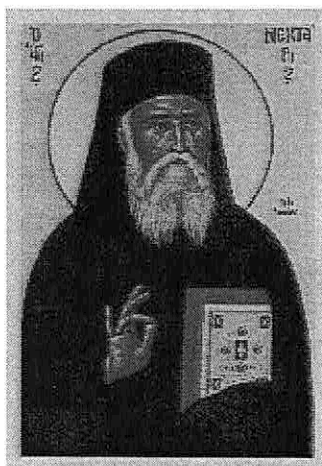
[Return to homepage \(framed\)](#) | [Return to homepage \(no frames\)](#) | [Return to home page](#)



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

The life of St Nektarios the Wonderworker, Metropolitan of Pentapolis

Commemorated November 9



The divine Nektarios of Aegina, is one of the most widely known of Greek Orthodox Saints. He was born on October 1st, 1846 in Silyvria, in Asia Minor (now occupied by Turkey). At Holy Baptism he was given the name Anastasios. His parents were simple pious Christians. They brought him up in a manner pleasing to God, and did what their very limited means allowed for his formal education. Having completed elementary school in his hometown, he left for the great city of Constantinople at the age of 14. There, he found employment as a shop assistant and was able to earn a meager living. As well as regularly attending the Divine Liturgy, he also read the Holy Scriptures and Writings of the Holy Fathers of the Church on a daily basis. From his wide reading, the young Anastasios made a collection of wise sayings, which he fervently spread to the customers of his store by writing them on the paper used to wrap their goods. He

was selected to teach the lower grades of the orphanage of the All-Holy Sepulchre in Constantinople. This allowed him to continue his studies, for he longed to become a Theologian. In 1866, at the age of 20, Anastasios went to the island of Chios, where he was appointed a teacher. After 7 years, he entered into the local monastery, under the care of the venerable elder Pachomios. After 3 years as a novice Athanasios was tonsured a Monk and given the name Lazarus. A year later, he was ordained a Deacon and received the name Nektarios. Elder Pachomios, and a wealthy local benefactor convinced the young monk to complete his high school studies in Athens. From there Deacon Nektarios went to Alexandria, where he was cared for by the Patriarch of Alexandria, Sophronios. The Patriarch insisted that Nektarios complete his Theological studies, and so in 1885 he graduated from the School of Theology in Athens. The Patriarch of Alexandria ordained Deacon Nektarios to the Priesthood in 1886. His great service to the Church, prolific writings and teachings, energy and zeal led Fr Nektarios to be ordained as the Metropolitan of Pentapolis in Egypt.

As a Metropolitan he was greatly admired and loved by his flock for his virtue and purity of life. But this great admiration by the people aroused the envy of certain high officials, who plotted and succeeded in having the Blessed Metropolitan removed from office in 1890 - without a trial or any explanation whatsoever. He returned to Greece to become a monk and Preacher, to the great edification of the people. There the Blessed Metropolitan continued to write his now famous books. In 1894, the divine Nektarios became Director of the Rizarios Ecclesiastical School, where he was to remain for 15 years. As an educator, the chief concern of the venerable Hierarch was to incite and guide youth to become good Christians. His fifteen years at Rizarios were also productive for the writing of many more books and teachings.

In 1904, our Saint founded a monastery for women in Aegina, the Holy Trinity Convent. Under his guidance the Convent flourished. In 1908, the Blessed Nektarios, at the age of 62, retired from the Rizarios Ecclesiastical School and withdrew to Holy Trinity Convent in Aegina. There, for the rest of his life as a true monk and ascetic. He served as a confessor and spiritual guide to the nuns and even priests from as far as Athens and Piraeus. His Holy and pious life shone forth like

a guiding light to all near him. Many would come to him for healing. Saint Nektarios was a great Wonder-worker even while alive.

On September 20, 1920 one of the nuns took him to the local hospital, in spite of his protest. He was convulsing in pain from a long-standing ailment. He was admitted, and placed into a ward reserved for the poor and unwanted. There he stayed for two months among the sick and dying. At 10:30 in the evening of November 8th, although in the midst of terrible pains, in peace and at prayer he gave up his spirit unto God at the age of 74.

As soon as the Saint gave up his Spirit, a nurse came to prepare him for transfer to Aegina for burial. As the nurse removed the Saint's sweater, she inadvertently placed it on the next bed, on which a paralytic lay. And O, strange wonder!, the paralytic immediately began to regain his strength and arose from his bed healthy, and glorifying God.

Some time after his repose, strangely a beautiful fragrance was emitted by his Holy body, filling the room. Many came to venerate his Holy relics prior to his burial. With amazement, people noted a fragrant fluid that drenched his hair and beard. Even after 5 months, when the nuns of the convent opened the Saint's grave to build a marble tomb, they found the Saint intact in every respect and emitted a wonderful and heavenly fragrance. Similarly three years later, the Holy Relics were still whole and radiating the same heavenly fragrance.

Many people had regarded Nektarios as a Saint whilst he was still alive, because of his purity of life, his virtues, the nature of his publications, his gift of foreknowledge and the miracles he performed. The recognition of him as a Saint spread rapidly after his repose. God confirmed the Sanctity of Nektarios at his repose and by the miracles attributed to the Saint after his repose. The Orthodox Church proclaimed him as a Saint on April 20, 1961. His Blessed memory is celebrated by the Church on November 9th.

Apolytikon of St. Nektarios

"Offspring of Silyvria and the guardian of Aegina,
the true friend of virtue who hath appeared in the last years,
Nektarios, we faithful honour thee as the Godly servant of Christ,
for you pour forth healing on everyone who piously cries out:
Glory to Christ Who hath glorified thee,
Glory to Him Who hath magnified thee,
Glory to Him who through thee workest healings to all".

To other Saints of the Orthodox Church

[Return to homepage \(framed\)](#) | [Return to homepage \(no frames\)](#) | [Return to home page](#)



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

St John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople (407 AD)

Commemorated November 13



St. John, who since the sixth century has been called Chrysostom or golden mouthed, was born in Antioch of a noble Christian family between 344 and 354 AD. He was brought up by his widowed mother and received the best education which Antioch could offer. He studied philosophy under Andragathius, rhetoric under the celebrated Libanius, and theology under Diodore of Tarsus. He became a monk by 375 and lived in a mountain community not far from Antioch. He nearly ruined his health through austerities and the damp conditions of his cave hermitage. He returned to Antioch in 381, was ordained deacon by Bishop Meletius, and served the local church until his ordination as priest in 386 by Bishop Flavian, the successor of Meletius. He then became the bishop's special assistant, particularly for the temporal care and spiritual instruction of the numerous Christian poor of the city.

St. John soon distinguished himself a preacher and commentator on the Epistles of St. Paul and the Gospels of Matthew and John (386-397). He insisted

in the Antiochene tradition on the literal meaning of Holy Scripture and its practical application to the problems of the time. Hence much of his work has relevance today also.

In 397, after the death of Archbishop Nectarius of Constantinople, Emperor Arcadius wished St. John to be chosen in his place. An envoy was sent to secretly detach John from Antioch, for fear of popular opposition. Theophilus, Archbishop of Alexandria consecrated him on February 398. John was the somewhat unwilling recipient of episcopal consecration at the hands of the at least equally unwilling Theophilus.

As Metropolitan of Constantinople, John immediately set about a much needed reform of the court, clergy and laity. He reduced the customary spending of his own household in favour of the poor and hospitals. He enacted severe discipline for the clergy and attacked the behaviour, the clothes, and the make-up of the women at court. He also criticised those Christians who had been to the races on Good Friday and to the games in the stadium on Holy Saturday.

In 401 AD, at a synod in Ephesus, he deposed six bishops, with the result that all forces opposed to him, at home and abroad, consolidated in a united effort to destroy him. The Empress Eudoxia regarded his drive for moral reform as a personal attack on herself. Meanwhile Theophilus made common cause with the empress and organised a cabal of 36 bishops, which assembled at Chalcedon in 403, as the Synod of the Oak. The synod condemned St. John unheard. He was charged on a series of more or less false charges, was also accused of treason for calling Eudoxia

'Jezebel', was dropped from his see, and asked for his banishment. Arcadius exiled John to Bithynia, but an earthquake in Constantinople terrified him and he recalled John the next day. John resumed his plain speaking, which again enraged Eudoxia; Theophilus intrigued against him with appeals to an Arian council of Antioch, and John was again banished, this time for resuming the duties of a see from which he had been 'lawfully deposed'. This took place on June 9, 404 AD; although his own people and many bishops supported him, he was exiled, first to Curusus in Armenia, where he remained three years, and then to Pontus, where he was killed by enforced travel in bad weather, on foot and in spite of repeated pleas of exhaustion. He died on September 14, 407 AD. Thirty-one years later his body was taken back to Constantinople and reburied in the church of the Apostles.

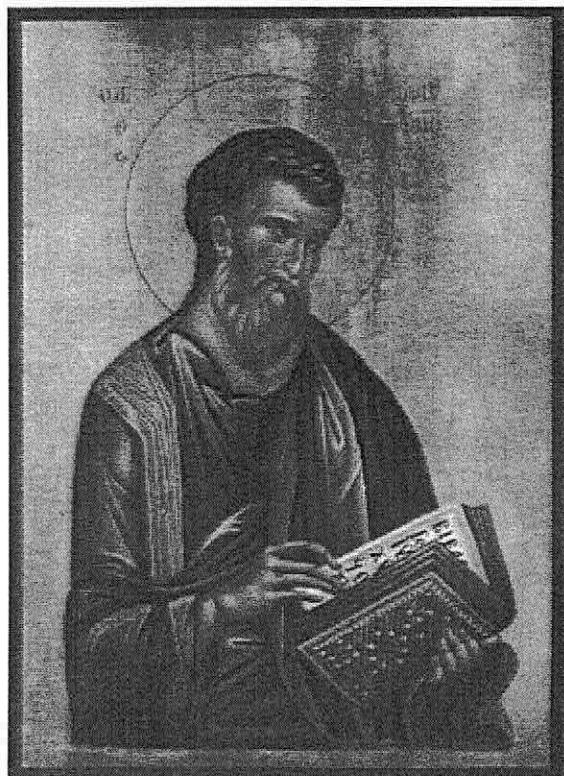
[Return to homepage \(framed\)](#) | [Return to homepage \(no frames\)](#) | [Return to home page](#)



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

Holy Apostle Matthew

Commemorated November 16



St. Matthew (meaning "gift of God") was identified as a tax collector (Matthew 9:9; 10:3) and was of Jewish race. In the other accounts of his meeting with Jesus (Mark 2:13, 14; Luke 5:27-29), he is called Levi. This use of two different names has led some scholars to argue for two different persons, due to the absence of Levi from the apostolic lists. Others, however, have argued that Matthew had a double name, because the Jews frequently carried two names - such as Simon/Peter and Saul/Paul. When he was called by Jesus (Matthew 9:9), Matthew renounced the position of tax collector and became His disciple. According to Christian tradition, after Pentecost Matthew, filled with the Holy Spirit, preached the gospel in many places, especially to the Jews.

The Gospel of Matthew, though it has come down to us in Greek, has a Jewish/Hebraic flavour, which is evident in its Aramaic expressions and forms, and its use of numerous quotations and arguments from the Old Testament. Furthermore, Matthew gives details of Jewish religious observations, and often uses

Jewish style and techniques of argument. God's final judgement, pictured in apocalyptic images common in Jewish writings, is also emphasized. Papias, a second-century Christian author, preserves the tradition that Matthew wrote the sayings of Christ in Aramaic, the common language of the Jews at the time of Christ, and that others later freely translated this work into Greek.

Though the Gospel does not name Matthew as the author, all the early manuscripts attribute authorship to Matthew, one of the twelve disciples listed in the New Testament. His authorship is attested by the universal witness of the ancient Church.

Matthew's usual emblem as an evangelist is a man, because his genealogy emphasized the family ties of Christ. He is commemorated in the Orthodox Church on November 16.

Reference **The Orthodox Study Bible**

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[Return to homepage \(framed\)](#) | [Return to homepage \(no frames\)](#) | [Return to home page](#)



St Gregory the Wonderworker

Commemorated November 17

by Fr George Poulos

The odds against anyone born Christian in the early third century, particularly in the city of Neocaesaria, were staggering; but there was born in that city in A.D. 203 a man who reversed those odds in Christianity's favour and who, as events bore out, made the number seventeen a special number. It was by coincidence that the number seventeen marked milestones in an illustrious career, but divine design that diverted a pagan from a course that would have led to oblivion to a course which led to sainthood and glory. The name of this saint has come to us as Gregory the Wonderworker, but he was born with the given name of Theodore in Neocaesaria, in the province of Pontus. From birth his pagan parents saw to his every need, save the spiritual, providing the tutors an easy task of a brilliant pupil whose education was aimed at making him a man of law and letters.

It was in Alexandria that young Theodore came upon the renowned Christian teacher Origen, recognised as the leading religious and philosophic figure who gathered the brightest students from all parts of the empire. Influenced by this masterful mentor, Theodore absorbed the teachings of Christianity, and in due course was converted with the given name of Gregory. As Gregory, he became a familiar figure in religious circles, displaying a wisdom beyond his years and an ever-increasing devotion to Jesus Christ, the Saviour who had been denied in his native city. He did not return to Neocaesaria until the year 288 AD, by which time his fame had preceded him. Rather than take up the practice of law as had been originally intended, he sought out the Christians with a determination to swell their ranks.

The word was sent to followers of Christ to assemble in secret, and was prevailed upon by those who gathered to become their bishop. Gregory assented and must have assumed that those present were but a contingent. When told that every Christian of the city was there, the dumbfounded Gregory counted heads, and there were exactly seventeen assembled. A lesser man would have been disillusioned, but the scant number only served to make Gregory all the more determined to bring more into the Christian fold. Ever the optimist, known for his cheerful outlook and good humour, St Gregory remarked there would be no challenge if the entire city were Christian and that the thousands of pagans represented an inspiration to serve God and man. He was ordained bishop of Caesaria by Bishop Phaidimos of Amasia and plunged into his task of conversion with a zeal that was so contagious that he was not many weeks in making the vast majority of the city Christian.

Pagan revelries gave way to the celebration of Christian holidays made both cheerful and solemn by the city's extremely popular bishop. The task was not an easy one, and on many occasions the growing number of Christians were put to flight only to return and gather more members when tempers had cooled. The transformation of an entire city by a single person was so remarkable that it was written about years later by such great hierarchs as St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory of Nyssa, both of whom not only recounted the exploits of their predecessor, but called attention to his magnificent writings and homilies as well.

Seldom in Christian history has the conversion of an entire city been attributed largely to the

efforts of one spiritual leader. The missionaries of old who covered vast territories were responsible for bringing Christ to larger numbers, but the uniqueness of Gregory's mission was his concentration on one city. In the end, however, not even the presence of a Christian populace could prevent the persecution of Bishop Gregory. He fell victim to the state whose leaders were largely pagan and who engaged in sporadic raids on unsuspecting Christians. Bishop Gregory was occupied in a successful defense of the faith against the heresy of Paul of Samosata when a handful of hardened pagans, under the protection of soldiers provided by the provincial governor, succeeded in seizing the bishop for trial and sentencing. Before he died, he was told that there were only seventeen pagans left in the city, the same number of Christians he had found at the outset. Gregory died for Christ on November 17.

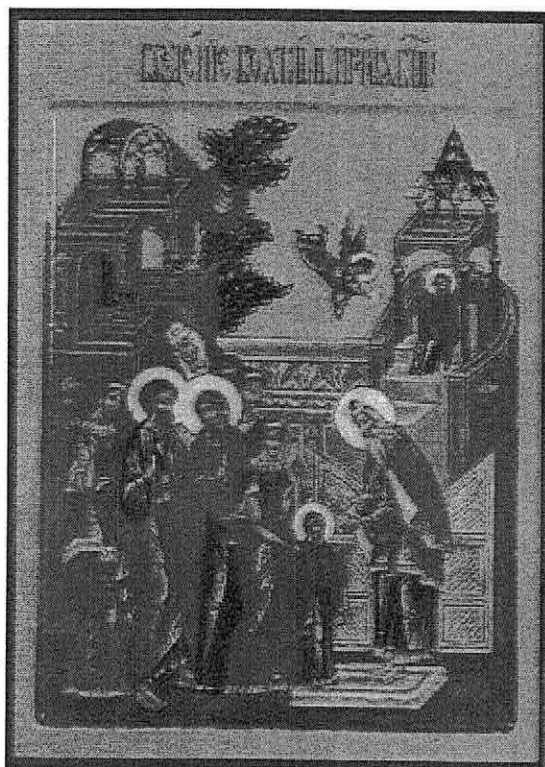
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[Return to homepage \(framed\)](#) | [Return to homepage \(no frames\)](#) | [Return to home page](#)



Presentation of the Virgin Mary

Commemorated November 21



It stands to reason that Almighty God's selection of the Virgin Mary to be the Mother of God was not a random selection. In his wisdom, God selected not from the nobility but from the humble, thoroughly devout, daughter of equally devout parents whose names were Joachim and Anna. Tradition has it that Anna, childless for many years, reached a point in her life when just short of despair she prayed in earnest that God grant her a child with a promise that should her wish be fulfilled she would pledge the child to his holy Temple. It did not matter to Anna that the child granted her by God was a girl and, faithful to her word, she presented her daughter, given the name of Mary, to the holy Temple at the age of three, on the 21st of November. She remained in the house of God for twelve years, emerging at the age of fifteen with a purity and wholesomeness found in no other creature of God. By the time she had been released to her parents, the saintly Mary was not only a flawless maiden but in her twelve years had acquired the lore and religion of the deepest scholars, something usually denied a female child of those days. So much has been

written of the Lord's mother that the concern here is for a glimpse into her life as a human being. The Virgin Mary is looked upon by Orthodoxy as "Panagia," which translates into the all-encompassing saint. Greek Orthodox Christians need but one name and that name is "Panagia," carrying the full impact on the Christian faith as no other name can regardless of the language. The beginnings of Christianity were not the scattered remnants that somehow merged into a smattering, of ideologies. By divine intent the great religion of Christ stemmed from a tight circle which spread itself out as the greatest of human experiences.

To begin with, the high priest entrusted with the care of Mary was Zacharias, who in turn was the father of St. John the Baptist, referred to as the prefiguration of the Messiah and the man who was to baptise Jesus Christ. Yet in her teens the Virgin Mary, in a story that cannot be told often enough, was visited by the Archangel Gabriel, sent by the Almighty himself to be told that she, a wisp of a girl, mortal but blessed, was to become the mother of the Son of God. There is every reason to believe that as electrifying as the news was, she received it with both joy and complete serenity. A girl can get excited by being elected "Queen of May" but to be "Queen of the Universe" must have been an anticipation not of excitement but the sublimest of joy, human or otherwise. It follows that both Joachim and Anna, as the grandparents so to speak, of the Son of God, are also venerated as saints of the Church, so much so that they are also known as the "Patron Saints of Pious Education," principally because of the twelve year course of study of religion of their daughter Mary. The Christian can make his own choice of his favourite among the four days of the year which are feast days of the Virgin Mary. These are the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary on September 8, the Presentation of the Virgin Mary on November 21, the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary on March 25, and the Dormition of the Virgin Mary on August

15. On the calendar of the Church, all four of these days are of equal importance. The world sees the Virgin Mary much as Michelangelo did when he carved out his famous Ficta in which a youthful looking Mary is holding the lifeless body of her crucified Son. Nowhere is she seen as an old woman, at least not at the age of a woman who is the mother of a thirty-three year old son. Among the Holy Land's most sacred shrines is the one at the base of the Garden of Gethsemane, the site of the agony of Christ. This shrine is dedicated to the Virgin Mary and her parents. After a descent down a cement stairway of about fifty steps, the tomb of Joachim is on the left and on the right of the tomb of his wife Anna. Some fifty steps below this is the empty tomb of the Virgin Mary since, like the Son of God, she ascended into heaven. Stories abound about the Virgin Mary but the truthful one that clings and shall do so forever is that in being the mother of the Son of God, she is the mother of the world. For this reason November 21 is one of Christianity's holiest feast days.

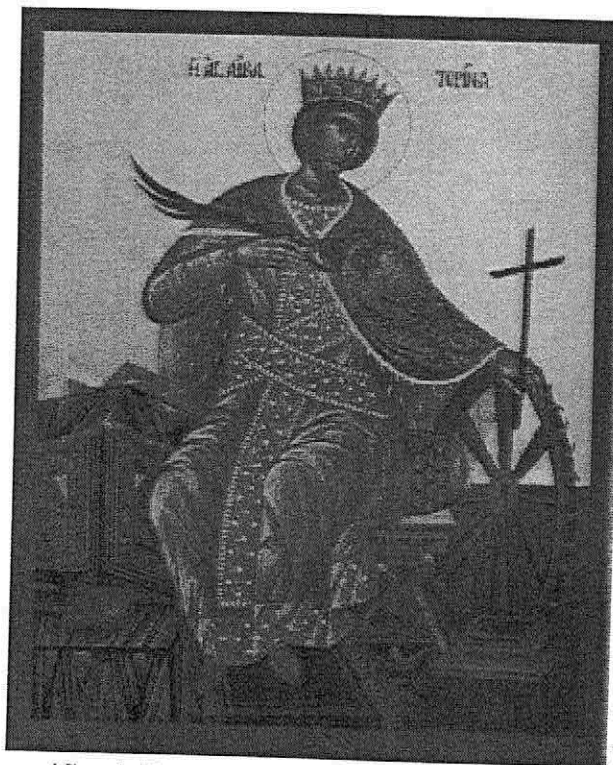
[Return to homepage \(framed\)](#) | [Return to homepage \(no frames\)](#) | [Return to home page](#)



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

Great Martyr St Katherine

Commemorated November 25



St Katherine, as a girl was not a Christian. She lived in the early fourth century Alexandria with her mother, a Christian, who raised her with the finest education.

Katherine's mother took her to a holy man who began to describe Jesus Christ to her. He told her to pray all night before an icon of the Theotokos and Jesus. When Katherine fell asleep, she saw a vision of the Theotokos and Jesus, but Christ would not look at her, saying that she was unworthy. Jesus told her to return to the elder for instructions, which she did. The elder baptized her and sent her to keep a vigil all night and to fast and pray. She saw the vision again, but Jesus told her she was now worthy to behold. He gave her a ring, which was also on her finger when she awoke, and remains on her finger to this day.

The emperor Maximinus commanded a festival to be held to the gods and many animals were sacrificed. Watching this in sadness, Katherine went to the emperor and told him that his gods were demons of fantasies and illusions. She told him that there was only one God, whose word maintains the world.

Maximinus, fearing that she would embarrass him, assembled 150 orators to debate her. The Archangel Michael appeared and told her that God would add to her wisdom, and that she would save many. She refuted the orators with the words of their poets who proclaimed the gods, and she used the words of their gods who foretold of the times of Jesus Christ. The emperor condemned the 150 to death by fire. Before they died, Katherine made the sign of the Cross over them as she had converted them. They all died, but not even a hair of their heads was singed.

The emperor tried to win Katherine by flattery, to no avail. She was beaten, bloodied, and imprisoned. The emperor's wife, his military commander, and 200 soldiers visited Katherine in prison, and all became Christians, but were beheaded by the emperor.

The emperor then asked Katherine to be his queen, if only she would worship his idols. When she refused, she went to the place of execution, followed by a crowd who mourned her. She told the unbelievers to mourn their own demise.

She prayed and was beheaded at the age of 18. Milk flowed from her wound. Her fragrant relics are at St Katherine's monastery at Mount Sinai.

[Return to homepage \(framed\)](#) | [Return to homepage \(no frames\)](#) | [Return to home page](#)



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

St Stylianos the Hermit

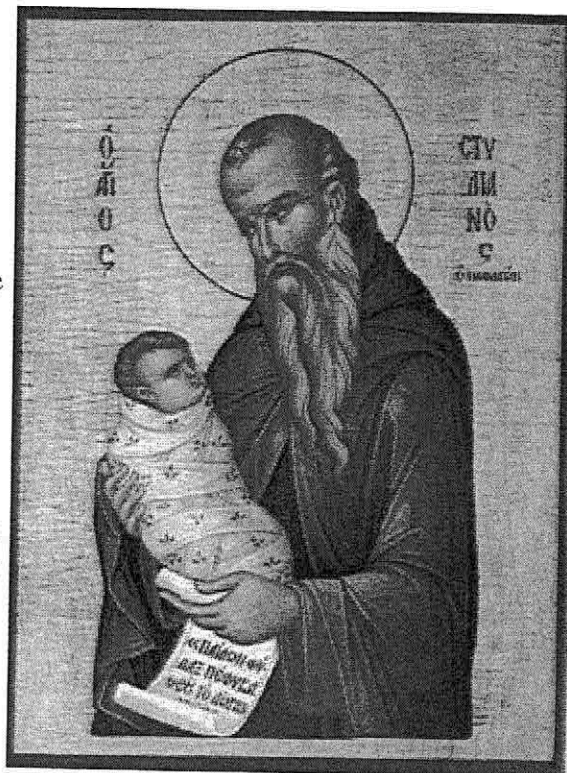
Commemorated November 26

St Stylianos was a man who practiced every day of his lifetime what Jesus preached when he said,

"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the Kingdom of God" (Luke 10:14).

His great concern for children was such that he came to be considered the patron saint of children, but he did not limit his benevolence to children alone, as his life story bears out.

Stylianos was born during the seventh century in Adrianopolis in the province of Paphlagonia into a family which for generations had known nothing but poverty, a circumstance which was accepted without complaint and in which the simple, uncomplicated life afforded them greater time for religious matters. What the family of Stylianos lacked in material things was more than offset by the wealth of a deep faith in Jesus Christ and a cheerful commitment to the Messiah who never owned anything more than the clothes he wore. Stylianos was early made aware of this affinity with the Lord and by the time he had reached maturity had acquired a profound sense of responsibility to the Savior. Determined to serve Jesus Christ to the fullest of his ability, Stylianos joined the hermits of the desert with a view toward cleansing his soul through a period of meditation and prayer, as well as through association with men likewise pledging their lives to Jesus Christ.



Unlike most other hermits, however, he did not withdraw from society altogether, preferring to go among the people for whatever good he might do, and then returning to his little cave for rest and prayerful meditation. One night while he prayed for guidance in helping others, Stylianos felt a divine presence and was consumed by the great glory of the Holy Spirit, emerging from his cave the next day with a spirit of exultation and serenity he had never known before.

In his customary rounds, wherein he counseled and comforted, he felt compelled to place his hand on a stricken child, something he had not up to that time dared to do; he felt the power of the Lord being transferred to the ailing youngster through his extended arm. The child immediately recovered, and thenceforth St Stylianos was sought after by every suffering soul for miles around, young and old. His cave became a magnet for the sick and suffering, many of whom received complete cures not only through the power in this man but through their faith as well, without which a sufferer's case was hopeless.

It was this time that St Stylianos concerned himself primarily with children, not just the physically afflicted but also those who were in need of spiritual guidance. Families from all walks

of life entrusted to St Stylianos the enlightenment of their children, and he was forced to seek out larger headquarters and to recruit from the ranks of his hermit friends the assistance needed to tend to so many. His was probably the first day-care center of the world, where mothers could safely leave their children while tending to other matters of the home.

St Stylianos was inadvertently qualified to become the patron saint of children yet to be born, owing to his miraculous intercession for a young woman who helped him with children but could bear none of her own. When the woman conceived, her husband out of sheer joy spread the word of this miracle, and before long many barren women came to the great hermit. Those whose faith in Jesus Christ was genuine became fertile. The cheerful countenance of St Stylianos was his hallmark, because he seemed always to be smiling. Now and then, however, he would be challenged by an outraged discreditor of little faith, and only then would the beaming hermit's face darken with a scowl. He was also approached by greedy mercenaries with all manner of propositions for commercializing his talents and reaping a tidy fortune, but for these people he always had the same answer: that he had been paid in advance for his services when the serenity of the Holy Spirit came upon him. He would smile as they left. He lived to a ripe old age, and it is said that, when he was buried his countenance still beamed with a faint smile from the light of the Lord.

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[Return to homepage \(framed\)](#) | [Return to homepage \(no frames\)](#) | [Return to home page](#)



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

St Andrew the Apostle, the First-Called

Commemorated November 30



As the first to be called by Jesus Christ into his service, St. Andrew commands a reverence a degree greater than those who have followed. For this reason, St. Andrew is called Protokletos, or "First-called."

St. Andrew, like his brother St. Peter, was a fisherman, a toiler with net and boat recognised in the Psalms of the Old Testament as one of those "who go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep." His love of the sea stemmed from his love of the Creator who made it, and the perils of the sea which he challenged daily forged the character with which he boldly assailed the seas of ignorance and paganism in the sacred trust that had been placed in his keeping.

St. Andrew, who lived in the Holy Land in the ancient city of Bethsaida, accepted Christ with all his heart and after a discipleship with St. John the Baptist went forth to become one of the greatest missionaries in all history. When the apostles drew

lots to determine their sphere of labour for the Saviour, St. Andrew exulted in his mission to preach in Asia Minor, part of Greece, and an area along the coast of the Black Sea, including its gateway, the city now known as Istanbul, or Constantinople.

Wherever St. Andrew went he attracted throngs of people who thirsted for a spiritual knowledge. His message of deliverance was so eloquently convincing, even to hostile minds, that he is credited with having converted countless thousands to Christianity in a day when mass media did not exist. As an apostle, his only tools were his power of oratory and his love for Jesus, and his only press agent was the word of mouth of those privileged to hear his homilies.

St. Andrew came to Jerusalem for the First Synod of the Apostles, about 50 AD, another historic first for him and the other apostles, some of whom he had not yet met. There he rejoiced in joining the great St. Peter together with those but for whom Christianity might never have become the glorious human experience it is today. Out of the Synod, the apostles went forth with renewed vigour to establish the ecclesiastical system.

St. Andrew alone is credited with having set up parishes throughout Asia Minor, in Pontos, Bithynia, Thrace, Macedonia, Greece, Scythia (Russia, where he is still regarded as patron saint) and in the capital city of Byzantium. It was in Byzantium that St. Andrew ordained Stachys as first bishop of Byzantium (later Constantinople), thereby establishing an unbroken line of 270 patriarchs down to the present day Patriarch Bartholomeos 1st. From Byzantium, St. Andrew

went on to more glory through his compelling oratory and power of healing through Jesus Christ. He eventually found himself in Achaia, in the city of Patras, where he was to suffer death.

St. Andrew committed the grave crime in the eyes of the state of converting Maximilla, wife of the ruler Aigeates, to Christianity. Despite the fact that he was then eighty years old, it was ordered that he be put to death by being nailed upside down to an X-shaped cross. After three days of agony on this vile device, St. Andrew died. The great fisherman had cast his net for Christ for the last time. St. Andrew's remains were brought to Constantinople two hundred years later and in 1460 his head was given to the pope. On 24 September 1964, in an ecumenical gesture, the head was returned to the people of Patras by the pope.

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