



## St Tryphon

Memory celebrated 1 February



St Tryphon was born in Lampsakon and raised by a very devout Christian family. From a young age he was blessed with the divine power to cure any type of sickness.

In the year 239 AD, Gordianos was the ruler of the Roman Empire, and even though he was a pagan he was not a Christian persecutor. The Emperor had an only child, a daughter. Many of the noblemen of the city desired to marry her, therefore her father locked her in a palace tower so that people could not see her. This girl became possessed and tortured by a demon. When her parents saw that she could not be cured, they became distressed. They were informed by the demon that he would not leave the girl's body unless Tryphon were present.

The Emperor sent messengers to every city and town of the Empire to find Tryphon. He promised a large reward to the one who brought the Saint to Rome. They arrived in Lampsakon, where Tryphon was watching over his geese. Seeing these noblemen, he knew immediately what their task was and said to them that he was Tryphon, the person they were sent to find. At this time Tryphon was 17 years old. They started immediately for their return to Rome. The demon knew of Tryphon's arrival three days prior to its occurrence and started to torment the girl even more than before. When Tryphon arrived in Rome, the demon could not look at the Saint and left the girl. Gordianos welcomed Tryphon as the person who had cured his daughter.

To make certain of Tryphon's validity, the Emperor asked him to make the demon appear before them so that he could ask him why he had possessed his daughter. The Saint fasted for six days, after which, he prayed to God to give him the power to perform his task. On the seventh day, the citizens of Rome gathered to see the miracle. After praying to God, Tryphon ordered the demon, in the name of Jesus Christ, to appear in front of them so that they may see the epitome of ugliness and sickness. Suddenly, a large black dog appeared in front of them. Tryphon then asked it why it had possessed the girl. The demon responded by saying that his father, Satan, who is the ruler of evil had sent it to torture the girl. The Saint continued his inquiry by asking, who gave the rulers of the underworld the authority to enter the bodies of the workers of God. He responded by saying that they had no authority to do so, but could only possess people who practised what the demon stood for.

The people were amazed when they saw and heard this. Gordianos rewarded the Saint with many gifts. Tryphon was accompanied back to his home and after returning, he continued curing those who came to him.

After the death of Gordianos, the pious Philip became the ruler of the Roman Empire. He ruled only for a short time due to his death in battle. Decius then became ruler in 250 AD. He had no tolerance for Christians. Those who worshipped the idols were rewarded, those who remained Christians were persecuted.

The pagans of the Eastern part of the Empire would betray Christians to their ruler, Achilion. A complaint was thus lodged against Tryphon. Achilion sent his envoys to find the Saint and he was taken to Nicaea to stand trial. When the Emperor saw that Tryphon would not deny his beliefs, he ordered his soldiers to hang him on a cross and stab him with their spears. He faced the torture without fear. The Emperor admired this courage and tried to persuade Tryphon to sacrifice to the gods and save himself. Seeing that he could not change the Christian's opinions, Achilion was extremely angered. He ordered that Tryphon be taken down from the cross. Planning to go on a hunting trip, he decided to take Tryphon with him. Tryphon was tied behind a horse so that he would have to keep up with riding soldiers by walking. The Saint suffered greatly. After several days, Achilion returned to Nicaea and Tryphon walked back to the city in the same manner.

Again, Achilion tried to persuade Tryphon to change his beliefs and again the Saint stood firm in his convictions. Achilion ordered the Saint's feet bound in chains and he was taken to the centre of the city to be beaten. Afterwards, Tryphon was burned with torches. During his agony, the martyr prayed to Christ not to forsake him.

Achilion gave Tryphon his last chance to deny Christ and save himself. If Tryphon refused, the soldiers were to behead him. The Saint looked toward heaven and prayed. So that his death could not be attributed to the tyrant, Tryphon died just before the soldiers beheaded him. Several Christians of Nicaea wanted to bury his body near the city, however, the Saint appeared in their dreams and directed them to bury his body in Lampsakon, where later, many miracles were attributed to him.

Saint Tryphon is considered by many farmers to be the protector of fields.

by Christina Dedoussis

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

## The presentation (meeting) of Our Lord in the Temple

Commemorated February 2



On the 2nd of February, our Holy Church celebrates the Feast of the Presentation of Christ to the Temple. The Church also refers to this Feast as the Synaxis (or meeting) of our Lord in the temple.

In accordance with the Mosaic law, 40 days after the birth of a male child the mother is required to present the child in the tabernacle and offer as a sacrifice either a lamb or a pair of doves or pigeons for her purification. The presentation of a first-born son also signified redemption or buying back, for all first-born creatures (both humans and animals) were considered to belong to God.

Mary and Joseph obeyed this precept of the law. They brought Jesus to the Temple where he was met and blessed by a very old Holy man. On that day in the Temple, both Simeon and a woman by the name of Anna, by inspiration of

the Holy Spirit, recognised the infant Jesus as the Messiah and Saviour of the world. Simeon had been promised by God that he would live to witness the coming of the Messiah to the world. These events are the subject of today's Gospel reading. (Luke 2:22-40)

Imagine this blessed scene, of an old man - barely able to hold himself upright due to his advanced years - fully attired in the Traditional clothing of the High Priest of the Temple, cradling the infant Jesus in his arms. It is the meeting of the Old Testament Priesthood in the Temple with the New Testament Priesthood in Christ. And hence the naming of this Feast day as the "Synaxis" or Meeting of our Lord in the Temple.

The Church today calls each one of us to make our Soul a Temple of God, where the Holy Virgin can bring her Divine Child. And each one of us should, like Simeon, take the Child in our arms and say to the Father:

"My eyes have seen your salvation, now let your servant depart in peace".

This Prayer of Simeon is used every day in the Vespers services of the Orthodox Church. But this prayer should be more to us than a description of someone who has been allowed to see and hold the Christ child requesting a peaceful departure. It should also mean for us, in particular, that having seen and touched the Saviour, we are released from the hold that sin has on us, and in peace, we can leave the realm of evil.

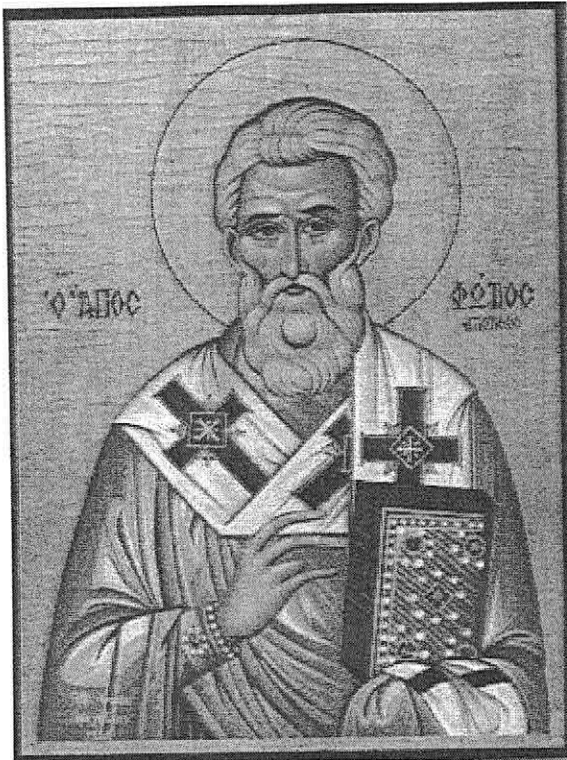
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# St Photios the Great - Patriarch of Constantinople

Commemorated February 6



St Photios (later known as Photios the Great - Patriarch of Constantinople) was born around 820 AD to holy parents, who were confessors of the Faith. His parents were persecuted for defending icons against the iconoclasts and were exiled from Constantinople. His greatness was not only due to his defence of Orthodoxy against heretical papal practices, but also connected to his love and meekness. He vigorously opposed the addition of the filioque clause to the Nicene - Constantinopolitan Creed, and wrote *On the Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit* to preserve "the purity of our religion" and to hinder "those who chose to promote any other definition of dogma than the unanimous and common faith of the pious". This treatise became the pattern for all subsequent Byzantine anti-Latin polemics.

The filioque doctrine, espoused by Western Christians, has its source from Augustine of Hippo (359 - 432 AD). Augustine had a fertile imagination, who could not shake off the Platonic influence of his

youth. The doctrine of a 'double procession of the Holy Spirit' was first adopted in the West at the Synod of Toledo (447 AD), which appears to have followed Augustine's teachings. This addition was forbidden by the Fourth Ecumenical Council (451 AD). Here is the origin of the problem that was to agitate the Church for a thousand years. Contentions that the filioque has Biblical foundations have yet to be demonstrated.

St. Photios was forced to become Patriarch of Constantinople, however he took his calling seriously and at once set to work as a man of God. One of his activities was to correct the error of pope Nicholas of Rome who enslaved the people of the West with threats of condemnation to hell for disobedience to the pope. Holy Photios wrote to Nicholas "Nothing is dearer than the Truth". In the same letter he noted "It is truly necessary that we observe all things, but above all, that which pertains to matters of Faith, in which but a small deviation represents a deadly sin".

As a Father of the Church, St. Photios was also known for his brilliance and for his missionary zeal. He blessed St Cyril in his work of developing an alphabet for the Slavonic people, and for the later work of St Cyril and his brother St Methodios as missionaries to the Slavonic people.

## On the Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit

That, even as the Son is proclaimed by the Sacred Oracles to be begotten of the



Father alone, so also is the Holy Spirit proclaimed by theology to proceed from this same and only cause. He is, however, said to be of the Son, since he is of one essence with Him and is sent through Him.

St. Photios reposed in the Lord in 891 AD, and his feast day is celebrated on February 6.

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# The Holy Fathers Sts Barsanuphius and John

Commemorated 6 February



A Christ-loving man asked St John, "Should one be curious about the Divine Mysteries? And is a sinner who approaches them condemned as unworthy?"

St John replied, "When coming into the holy temple to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, and when receiving Them, pay heed to yourself that you unfailingly believe the truth of this [Sacrament]. But as to how this happens, do not be curious, as it has been said: 'Take, eat, this is My Body and Blood'. The Lord gave them to us for the remission of sins (Matt 26:26, Mark 14:22). We have hope that he who believes thus will not be condemned, but he who does not believe is already condemned. And thus, do not forbid yourself to approach, condemning yourself as a sinner, but recognize that a sinner who

approaches the Saviour is vouchsafed the remission of sins".

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beard with torches. The fire reflected off the Saint's face and burned the bystanders. Sevirus was amazed at this time and was curious to know who Christ was. Crispos said to him that a harlot named Mary had borne Him. A man named Aristarchos warned Crispos not to blaspheme. A fit of madness overcame Sevirus and as he shot arrows towards the sky, he ordered Christ to come and fight him. Suddenly, the earth quaked and a fierce storm arose. Sevirus and Crispos begged the Saint to save them. Sevirus' daughter Galinee, came into the room and warned her father to believe in Christ. She asked the Saint to forgive her father and to pray to God to end this calamity. The Saint prayed and the acts of God stopped.

After 30 days, Sevirus again told Charalambos to sacrifice to the gods, but Charalambos refused. He then ordered that a bridle be placed in the Saint's mouth and that he be taken throughout the city in the same manner as a horse. Galinee begged her father to stop these tortures or else he would be condemned to eternal damnation. Sevirus was angered by his daughter's words and ordered her to sacrifice to the gods. In the Temple of Zeus she told the priests that she cursed the gods, then she prayed to the true God. The statues of all the gods were destroyed. Sevirus ordered more statues to be made and placed in the temple so the people would not mock the gods. Once again, Galinee went to the temple, prayed to God and the statues were destroyed.

To insult Charalambos, he was driven to a widow to be guarded. When he arrived at her home, he leaned against a dry wooden beam. This beam was transformed into a tree. The woman was so frightened that she asked the Saint to leave her home since it was not worthy of his presence. He told her to have faith in God and she would have nothing to fear. The next day the neighbours saw the tree in her garden and upon asking, they learned of the miracle. They sat with the Saint and discovered Christianity. The pagans told Sevirus about these happenings and the eparch advised Sevirus to have Charalambos beheaded. The Saint was captured, but before his execution, he prayed to Christ. He died in peace before the soldiers could behead him. Galinee took his body and placed it in a golden coffin.

St. Charalambos guarded his people much as a shepherd would guard his flock, therefore, he is considered to be the protector of shepherds and their flocks. The body of St. Charalambos is now in the Monastery of Saint Stephen in the Meteora, Greece, where it performs miracles to this day.

by Christina Dedoussis from **Voice in the Wilderness**  
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Church of St. George, South Brisbane, Qld

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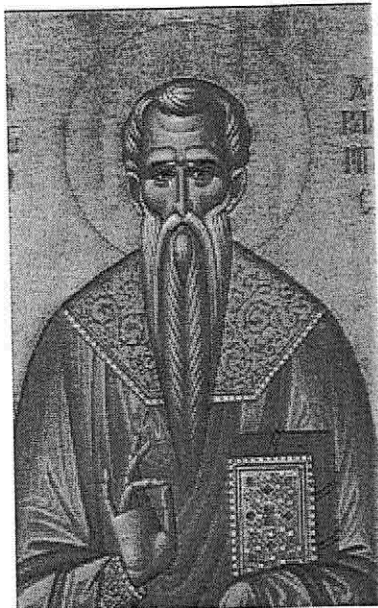
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# St Charalambos The Wonder-Worker

Commemorated February 10



St Charalambos was a priest in the city of Magnesia, near Smyrna in Asia Minor. About 198 AD, Sevirus, the Emperor of the Roman Empire had appointed Loucius to govern Asia Minor. Many Christians were persecuted under his reign. At this time Charalambos was in Magnesia and openly taught the Christian religion. When Loucius discovered this, he captured Charalambos for trial. Asked why he condemned the idols and disobeyed the laws of the Empire, Charalambos informed Loucius that he adhered to the laws of Jesus Christ and no others. He maintained that Christ offered eternal life to his followers. The governor commanded Charalambos to sacrifice to the gods and forsake Christ, or else undergo fierce tortures. The Saint refused to deny his beliefs.

Charalambos was stripped of his clothing and his body was ripped with iron claws. He withstood the torture with courage. One of the dukes became enraged that he took the iron claw and began to rip Charalambos' flesh with more fervour than his soldiers. At this point the first miracle occurred. The Duke's hands became paralysed. Screaming, he asked Loucius to help him. Seeing the Duke's plight, the governor spat in the Saint's face. Immediately the pagan's head twisted in an awkward position, where it remained. The onlookers were terrified and begged the Saint to pray to Christ to save them. Charalambos beckoned them to pray and ask forgiveness for their sins. The Duke pleaded with Charalambos to pray to Christ to recover the use of his hands. When the Saint finished praying, the Duke's hands were healed. He was then baptised and became a devout Christian.

After these events, many people from Magnesia and other parts of Asia came to Charalambos, confessed their sins and were baptised. The Saint performed many miracles by curing the faithful of many illnesses. When Sevirus heard of this he was greatly angered and sent soldiers to Magnesia to find the Saint, drive nails into his back, and then drag him from Magnesia to Antioch. The soldiers found Charalambos and carried out the order. They tied a rope to his beard and dragged him behind a horse, but a voice told them to leave this man alone for God was with him. Frightened, they took Charalambos to Antioch without further torture.

Sevirus, informed of what had happened, sent another group of soldiers to torture the Saint. They tied a skewer to his chest and gathered wood so that they could burn him. He was turned on the skewer with the fire burning him for several hours. Through Divine Help the Saint was not hurt. Sevirus ordered that the Saint be brought before him. He asked the Saint what his age was and was told that he was 113 years old.

A young man had died in the city and Sevirus ordered the Saint to resurrect him to show the strength of his God. After praying several hours, God, through Charalambos, performed the miracle. Many pagans converted to Christianity when they saw this, however, an eparch named Crispos asked Sevirus to execute the Saint because he had performed this miracle through the use of magic. Sevirus asked Charalambos to sacrifice to the gods to save himself but he refused, therefore, Sevirus ordered his soldiers to hit the Saint's jaws with rocks and burn his face and



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

## The Hieromartyr Blasios (or Blaise), Bishop of Sebaste

Commemorated February 11



St Blasios was born in Cappadocia during the 3rd century AD. He was meek and God-fearing from childhood, and was chosen for his virtues as Bishop of Sebaste. He was a great spiritual and moral light in that pagan town during a period of violent persecution of Christians, who healed the diseases of both humans and beasts, and especially infants. St. Blasios encouraged his flock and visited Christians in prison, amongst whom was St Eustratios. Later St Blasios collected St Eustratios' relics and executed his last will and testament.

When Sebaste was left denuded of Christians, after some were killed and others fled, St Blasios went to the mountains of Argeos and lived there in a cave. Ferocious beasts would come to him to feed him as he cared for them like a human flock. The Roman persecutors eventually found the Saint and as they were taking him away to be judged he healed a boy who had a fishbone stuck in his throat. The cruel judges had the Saint tortured and flogged. While he was being tortured, his steadfastness in the Christian faith brought many unbelievers to the faith. Seven women and two children were thrown into prison with him. The women were slain first, and then Blasios and the two children were beheaded in c. 316 AD at the order of Agricolaus, prefect of Armenia under Emperor Licinius.

### Dismissal Hymn of the Hieromartyr - Fourth Tone

As a sharer of the ways and a successor to the throne of the Apostles, O inspired of God, thou foundest discipline to be a means of ascent to divine vision. Wherefore, having rightly divided the word of truth, thou didst also contest for the Faith even unto blood, O Hieromartyr Blasios. Intercede with Christ our God that our souls be saved.

### Kontakion of the Hieromartyr - Second Tone

O Unfading bloom, thou Godly shoot and fruitful branch of Christ God the Vine, O holy and God-bearing Blasios, do thou fill with thy joy them that with faith observe thy memorial; and unceasingly intercede with Christ our Redeemer that we all be saved.

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

## St Zacharias Patriarch of Jerusalem

Commemorated February 21

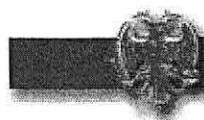
St. Zacharias served as Patriarch of Jerusalem (609-632AD), succeeding Isaacius (601-609). According to John Zonaras, the great compiler of the Canons, his tenure lasted twenty-three years; but according to St. Nicephorus, it lasted twenty-two years. The holy Zacharias, in turn, was succeeded by St. Modestus. In the life of St. Modestus, the following was written concerning his predecessor,

"History will always remember the imprisoned Patriarch Zacharias, the heroic champion of the Holy Land, with great admiration and respect for refusing to be separated from the most venerable Cross".

Meletius states that at the time of Emperor Heraclius (614), the blessed Zacharias was imprisoned by Chosroes, but he returned to Jerusalem with Heraclius, who had driven out the Persians. Jerusalem, in the meantime, was rebuilt, and the captured Holy Cross was returned and elevated once again by the hands of St. Zacharias on the 14th of September, 629. This latter event is commemorated as the Feast of the Elevation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross, on September 14.

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

## St Eustathios of Antioch

Memory celebrated February 21

The early church of Jesus Christ was composed of five Episcopal sees, each supreme in its own sphere of influence and collectively answerable to the Kings of Kings. The five centres of Christianity were in the cities of Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Rome, the last of which, because it was the political centre of the empire, had a bishop, as did all the others, who was honoured with the title of "first among equals."

St. Eustathios of Antioch is a little-known saint, not because of his small contribution, but because his stature has diminished over the years because Antioch is scarcely more than a memory. The assertiveness of Rome in 1054 AD split the East and West in a 900-year rift.

Many heresies dogged the early Christian Church. A Council was called by the Emperor Constantine in 325 AD to put an end to the internal strife caused by the Arian and other heresies of the time. Among the champions of tradition called upon to discredit Arianism was the venerable Patriarch of Antioch, Eustathios, who joined other clerics of distinction in a condemnation of the wily Arius, excommunicated in a document with such a conciliatory tone that allowed his followers in the Middle East to continue to influence thought after the Council had adjourned. Each of the dignitaries returned to his respective community convinced that peace and order had been restored, but that was hardly the case. The Arians were stubborn fanatics, as subsequent events were to prove.

While yet discredited they sought to fight back by bringing about a denunciation by devious means of those who had been in the ban at the council which had been so nobly conducted, only to be attached later on. The prime target for the malcontents who refused to concede to the truth was Bishop Eustathios, whose downfall was carefully plotted and relentlessly pursued. They set false rumours into circulation, nursing these vile innuendos until they assumed serious proportions which they were clever enough to make appear credible. With mounting howls of protests for the bishop of Antioch to step down, the detractors of Eustathios sent a delegation to the emperor with documents tailored to their claims of the holy man's guilt, the clamour being capped by a sworn statement of a bribed prostitute that the aging bishop had fathered her illegitimate child. When Constantine hesitated to act even with this contrived evidence, Eustathios was then falsely accused of having deliberately insulted the sister of the emperor. With ever mounting criticism assuming the proportions of a storm of protest never before to reach the royal household, Constantine finally gave in to the Arians in Thrace.

The woman's confession on her deathbed that she had lied after accepting a bribe to falsely accuse the bishop came late. Eustathios died in exile on February 21, but his earthly remains were brought back to Antioch for an apologetic funeral service at which he was eulogised by the greatest orator of all time, St John Chrysostom.

from **Orthodox Saints**, v. 1  
by Fr George Poulos, Holy Cross Orthodox Press

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

## St Polycarp

Commemorated February 23

St. Polycarp was Bishop of Smyrna and one of the Apostolic Fathers. He was a student of the Apostle John the Theologian and was personally acquainted with 'others who had seen the Lord'. St. Polycarp served as a link between the Apostolic age and Orthodoxy of the latter part of the second century.

St. Polycarp was a new kind of Christian for his time. He was not a Jew and was not familiar with Old Testament Scriptures; instead he immersed himself in the Apostolic tradition. This is evident by his writings that weaved together phrases from a wide range of Apostolic writings.

Here is a quote from his letter to the Philippians, dated ca. 135 AD, that seems appropriate for the Easter period, "Everyone who does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is an Antichrist; whoever does not confess the testimony of the cross, is of the devil; and whoever perverts the sayings of the Lord for his own desires, and says that there is neither resurrection nor judgement, such a one is the first-born of Satan. Let us therefore, leave the foolishness and the false-teaching of the crowd, and turn back to the word which was delivered to us in the beginning. Let us, then, continue unceasingly in our hope and in the Pledge of our justification, that is, in Christ Jesus, who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, who did no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth; yet, for our sakes, that we might live in Him, He endured everything".

On the day of his death and once he finished his prayers in which he remembered everyone he met, St. Polycarp was seated on a donkey and led into the city (presumably Rome), where he was asked to slander Christ. St. Polycarp replied "Eighty-six years I have served Him, and He has never done me wrong. How, then, should I be able to blaspheme my King who has saved me?" This indicates that, even if he was baptised as a child, he must have been born around 69 AD.

St. Polycarp was then beaten to death and his body, being confiscated by a centurion, was burnt. His bones were later collected and hidden by Christians. It is traditionally accepted that he was martyred on Saturday 23 February 155 AD.

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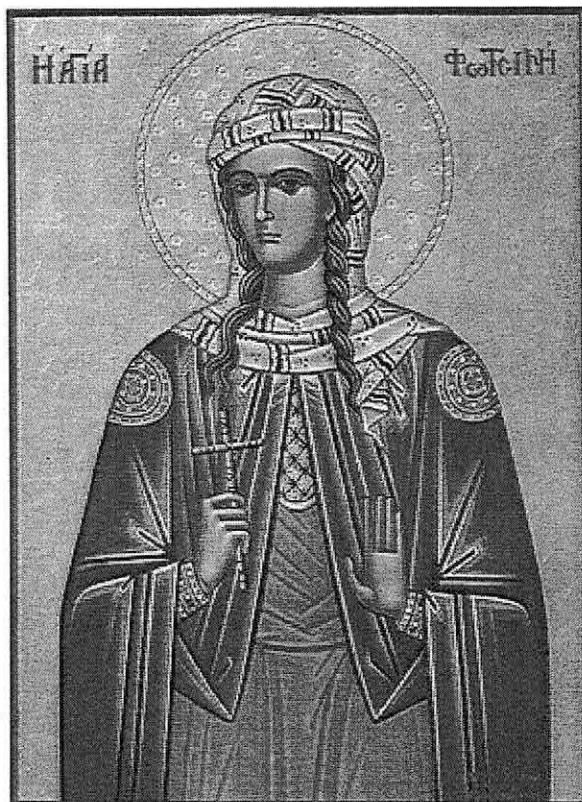
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## St Photini, The Samaritan Woman -

Commemorated February 26



The New Testament describes the familiar account of the "woman at the well" (John 4:5-42), who was a Samaritan. Up to that point she had led a sinful life, one which resulted in a rebuke from Jesus Christ. However, she responded to Christ's stern admonition with genuine repentance, was forgiven her sinful ways, and became a convert to the Christian Faith - taking the name 'Photini' at Baptism, which literally means "the enlightened one".

A significant figure in the Johannine community, the Samaritan Woman, like many other women, contributed to the spread of Christianity. She therefore occupies a place of honour among the apostles. In Greek sermons from the fourth to the fourteenth centuries she is called "apostle" and "evangelist." In these sermons the Samaritan Woman is often compared to the male disciples and apostles and found to surpass them.

Later, Byzantine hagiographers developed the story of the Samaritan Woman, beginning where Saint

John left off. At Pentecost Saint Photini received baptism, along with her five sisters, Anatole, Photo, Photis, Paraskeve, Kyriake, and her two sons, Photeinos and Joseph. She then began a missionary career, traveling far and wide, preaching the good news of the Messiah's coming, His death and resurrection. When Nero, the emperor of Rome, began to persecute Christians, Photini and her son Joseph were in Carthage, in Africa, where she was preaching the Christian gospel. After Jesus appeared to Photini in a dream, she sailed to Rome. Her son and many Christians from Africa accompanied her. Photini's arrival and activity aroused curiosity in the capital city. Everyone talked about her, "Who is this woman?" they asked. "She came here with a crowd of followers and she preaches Christ with great boldness."

Soldiers were ordered to bring her to the emperor, but Photini anticipated them. Before they could arrest her, Photini, with her son Joseph and her Christian friends, went to Nero. When the emperor saw them, he asked why they had come. Photini answered, "We have come to teach you to believe in Christ." The half-mad ruler of the Roman Empire did not frighten her. She wanted to convert him! Nero asked the saints their names. Again Photini answered. By name she introduced herself, her five sisters and younger son. The emperor then demanded to know whether they had all agreed to die for the Nazarene. Photini spoke for them. "Yes, for the love of Him we rejoice and in His name we'll gladly die." Hearing their defiant words, Nero ordered their hands beaten with iron rods for three hours. At the end of each hour another persecutor took up the beating. The saints, however, felt no pain. Nothing happened to their hands. Photini joyfully quoted words of a psalm by David: "God is my help. No matter what anyone does to me, I shall not be afraid." Perplexed by the Christian's endurance and confidence, Nero ordered the men thrown into jail.

Photini and her five sisters were brought to the golden reception hall in the imperial palace. There, the six women were seated on golden thrones, In front of them stood a large golden table covered with gold coins, jewels and dresses. Nero hoped to tempt the women by this display of wealth and luxury. Nero then ordered his daughter Domnina, with her slave girls, to go speak with the Christian women. Women, he thought, would succeed in persuading their Christian sisters to deny their God.

Domnina greeted Photini graciously, mentioning the name of Christ. On hearing the princess' greeting, the saint thanked God. She then embraced and kissed Domnina. The women talked. But the outcome of the women's talk was not what Nero wished.

Photini catechized Domnina and her hundred slave girls and baptized them all. She gave the name Anthousa to Nero's daughter. After her baptism, Anthousa immediately ordered all the gold and jewels on the golden table distributed to the poor of Rome.

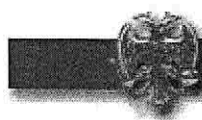
When the emperor heard that his own daughter had been converted to Christianity, he condemned Photini and all her companions to death by fire. For seven days the furnace burned, But when the door of the furnace was opened, it was seen that the fire had not harmed the saints. Next the emperor tried to destroy the saints with poison, Photini offered to be the first to drink it. "O King," she said, "I will drink the poison first so that you might see the power of my Christ and God." All the saints then drank the poison after her. None suffered any ill effects from it. In vain Nero subjected Photini, her sisters, sons and friends to every known torture. The saints survived unscathed to taunt and ridicule their persecutor. For three years they were held in a Roman prison. Saint Photini transformed it into a "house of God." Many Romans came to the prison, were converted and baptized. Finally, the enraged tyrant had all the saints, except for Photini, beheaded. She was thrown first into a deep, dry well and then into prison again. Photini now grieved that she was alone, that she had not received the crown of martyrdom together with her five sisters, Anatole, Photo, Photis, Paraskeve and Kyriake and her two sons, Photeinos and Joseph. Night and day she prayed for release from this life. One night, God appeared to her, made the sign of the cross over her three times. The vision filled her with joy. Many days later, while she hymned and blessed God, Saint Photini gave her soul into God's hands. The Samaritan Woman conversed with Christ by the well of Jacob, near the city of Sychar. She drank of the "living water" and gained everlasting life and glory. For generation after generation, Orthodox Christians have addressed this prayer to the woman exalted by the Messiah when He sat by the well in Samaria and talked with her:

Illuminated by the Holy Spirit, All-Glorious One,  
from Christ the Saviour you drank the water of salvation.  
With open hand you give it to those who thirst.  
Great-Martyr Photini, Equal-to-the-Apostles,  
pray to Christ for the salvation of our souls.

Adapted from **Saints and Sisterhood: The lives of forty-eight Holy Women**  
by Eva Catafygiotu Topping  
Light and Life Publishing Company

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

## St Kyranna of Thessaloniki

Memory celebrated 28th February

The darkest chapter in Greek history was the 400 years of oppression under muslim Turkish rule. Even so this period had a brighter side in that it provided a proving ground for Christianity out of which emerged heroes and heroines, some of whom have been Sainted. One of these was a girl name Kyranna of Thessaloniki, a city which was under complete domination of Turkey when Kyranna was born in 1731.

A practice of the conquerors was to seize a boy from his Christian family and take him with others to a spiritual and military training area where they would be brainwashed and raised as muslims. The youngsters grew up to be known as Janissaries, as pitiless and cruel as their teachers, all sworn to die for allah in what they considered a holy cause. An encounter with one of the Janissaries was to prove the undoing of Kyranna and lead to her ultimate sacrifice for Jesus Christ.

Reared in a devout Christian family of Thessaloniki, Kyranna attained womanhood with a reputation for piety which was belied by her extreme beauty. It did not seem to the casual onlooker that a woman of such breathtaking beauty could be such a devout church-goer, more concerned for how she looked to God than how she appeared to those about her. Her hand was sought by a good number of young Greek males, but she was also the choice of a young Janissary who made his intentions known after meeting her while carrying out his duties as a tax collector.

The youthful tax collector had the appealing good looks and bearing of his Greek ancestry, but Kyranna rejected the suitor with the flat statement that she would never love a muslim, let alone marry one! Thus denied, the spurned lover vowed she would be his or no one else's and in a jealous rage brought false charges against Kyranna, who was promptly hauled before the magistrate in a mockery of what passed for justice in those days.

St Kyranna was accused of having accepted a proposal of marriage, together with a promise to become a muslim convert, and then having withdrawn her solemn vow. The denial of these false charges was of no avail, and the presiding official condemned her to prison, there to reflect on her affront and perhaps change her mind. A week of horror in a squalid jail could not force St Kyranna to change her mind, and she was then subjected to tortures too inhuman to describe. The young man visited her in jail to find her hanging on the torture rack and observed a heavenly light shining on her bruised and battered body. She fell asleep in the Lord on February 28th 1751 AD at the age of 20, and the site of her burial place has since been the scene of many miracles.

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