



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

## St. Andreas the Valiant Archbishop

Commemorated July 4

St. Andreas, although born in Damascus of Asia Minor in 669 AD, and grew up in the city of the Passion and Resurrection of Our Lord, yet he is closely associated with the island of the heroes, of Crete. His parents, George and Gregoria, being devout Christians, infused the soul of their son with the commandments of God. His Christian education bestowed St. Andreas with the required qualities of distinction. He was tonsured a monk at a young age and later distinguished himself as patriarchal notary in Jerusalem.

At the age of 25 he was ordained deacon by the Patriarch of Constantinople George. St. Andreas looked upon the city of Jerusalem and upon Constantinople as the beacons of universal education and as sources of theological thought. His presence could not go unnoticed. He was referred to as "wV póliV epánw órouV keimenh". His prudence and vigour were soon recognised by the Patriarch of Jerusalem who included him in the delegation to the sixth Ecumenical Synod in Constantinople in 680 AD. That Synod convened in order to examine the issue of Monophysitism - Monothelitism. The works lasted for approximately a year and meetings totalled eighteen. St. Andreas exhibited strategic qualities in defending Orthodox faith and defeated the cause of the heretics. By the end of the Synod the disparities between the parties had been dissolved.

At the age of 51 St. Andreas was appointed Archbishop of Crete. As chief administrator on ecclesiastical matters on the island he assumed the responsibility of organising the Church of Crete. During his office he prompted philanthropy, erected churches and charitable institutions. St. Andreas comforted and encouraged his flock during harsh times. He distinguished himself as an orator and great hymnographer. Today, approximately 100 canons and numerous troparia of the saint are preserved. Being extremely sensitive and receptive to social problems, he would travel to Constantinople to consult with the head of the Church. During one of his trips, the saint passed away on board ship on his way back to Crete. He was buried in the Church of Agia Anastasia on the island of Chios in 740 AD. Our church celebrates his memory on July 4 every year.

It is customary in Crete to praise a person who exhibits valour all his life. The valiant never perish, we believe. They are always contemporary and an inspiration to all those who dare stand up against the enemy to defend our priceless and perennial heritage. It is high time to rally our forces, assume initiative to claim what is rightfully ours. It is our destiny to defend our beliefs and come out victorious, in spite of the fact that we are always outnumbered by the numerous enemies.

from **The Orthodox Messenger**, v. 8 (7/8), July/Aug 1997  
published bi-monthly by the SA Central Youth  
PO Box 269, GLENELG SA 5045 AUSTRALIA

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

## St Prokopios, Great Martyr

Commemorated July 8

by D. Michelis

Theodosia, the fanatical pagan mother of Prokopios, who loathed Christians, did all in her power to raise her son a pagan, and she was successful.

In his youth, Prokopios was a typical pagan. Yet, God had other plans for this young man. His daily contact with Christians, from whom he heard many astonishingly beautiful things about Christ and His Holy Apostles, slowly interested him in the faith he up to then had despised. He began to see that the Christians, though lacking beautiful temples embellished with statues and decorous splendour, possessed another kind of beauty not to be found in any other religion or philosophical system.

They possessed the truth, indeed, the ultimate truth about God, man, salvation, and eternal life.

With the passing of time, he was baptised to live ever after as a very devout Christian. Thus, by the grace of Almighty God, a former typical pagan had now been transformed to an ideal Christian. In fact, this is how Eusebios, a noted church historian and contemporary of Prokopios, described the saint and his martyrdom.

"He was a man so filled with divine grace that he had devoted himself to chastity and the practice of all virtues. He had reduced his body until he had given it, so speak, the appearance of a corpse, but his soul drew from the word of God so great a vigour that the body itself was refreshed by it."

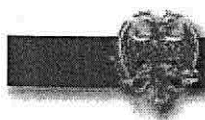
Studying on the Divine Word so filled his being that he remained absorbed in it day and night without fatigue. Filled with goodness and gentleness, regarding himself as the least of men, he edified everyone by his discourses. The Word of God was his sole study, and he had but little knowledge of profane science. Born at Aelia (the pagan name of Jerusalem), he had taken up his residence at Scythopolis to Caesarea.

He had scarcely passed the city gates when he was conducted into the presence of the governor, and even before he had had a taste of chains or prison walls, he was urged by the judge, Flavian, to sacrifice to the gods.

But he, in a loud voice, proclaimed that there were not several gods, but one alone, the creator and author of all things.

This answer made a vivid impression on the judge. Finding nothing to say in reply, he tried to persuade Prokopios, at least, to sacrifice to the emperors. This martyr of God spurned his entreaties. "Listen," he said, "it is not good to have several masters; let there be one chief, one king". At these words, as though he had uttered insults against the emperors, the judge ordered him to be executed.

They cut off his head, and he passed happily to eternal life on the eighth day in the month of July. This was the first martyrdom that took place in Caesarea. And so a beautiful soul, that for years



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

## St Pankratios, Bishop of Taormina, Sicily

Memory celebrated 9 July

Among the many who made the journey to Jerusalem to hear the words of Jesus Christ were the parents of an only child whose name, Pankratios, is too little known, despite the fact that not only did he commit himself to Jesus Christ as a boy, but as he grew to manhood, he became a missionary and confidant of the two mightiest saints of Christianity, Sts. Peter and Paul. The parents of the boy, who was to join the company of saints with whom he served the Messiah, made a journey on foot from ancient Antioch to Jerusalem that altered the course of their lives, making devout Christians of the parents and of the son a true servant of the Lord.

Pankratios had come of age when the Messiah was crucified, and although there is no record that he enjoyed the company of the living Christ, he did pledge himself to what was then called the New Faith of the Nazarenes and went forth to preach with a missionary zeal that soon enough drew him to the attention of St. Peter. Pankratios and his parents had the distinction of being baptised by St. Peter who made it a point to visit the family whenever he was in Antioch, a city in which he won so many converts that the name "Christian" supplanted the original Nazarene.

Pankratios was assisted in his missionary work by his father, Markellos, who went so far as to forsake his enterprises and give all his worldly goods to the poor to help his son in full service to Jesus Christ. Other areas were in greater need of missionaries, and to this end, St. Peter ordained Pankratios bishop of Taormina in distant Sicily, there to serve a predominantly Greek colony that knew little or nothing about Jesus Christ. Not one to sit back and gaze out over the sea in contentment, Pankratios preached aboard the ship that carried him to Sicily so that when it made port the vessel's chief officers, Lykaonides and Romulus, were confirmed Christians who made it their business to let every seafarer they could reach hear about the faith of Jesus Christ. The ship had no sooner docked than Pankratios disembarked and set about the Lord's business in a hurry and never slackened his pace until his untimely and brutal death.

It was during his ministry in spiritually darkened Sicily that Pankratios met the magnificent St. Paul, considered by most to be the greatest apostle of Christianity. No higher tribute could have been paid a fellow Christian than to receive the plaudits of St. Paul who commended Pankratios for his most impressive work in introducing Christianity to islanders who for too long had not only been isolated from the mainland but from God's light as well. To convert hidebound pagans of that area, known for their deep seated resentment for mainland intruders into very devout Christians was no small task, but the pagan priests were no match for Pankratios who saw to the rapid elimination of ritualistic temples replaced by the churches of Jesus Christ.

Pankratios had a formidable ally in the magistrate, Bonafatios, whom he had converted to Christianity, in gratitude for which the magistrate enlisted a whole host of labourers whom he supervised in the erection of a new Christian church, a feat accomplished in a thirty- day period. The very sight of this church which seemed to have mushroomed from out of the the earth was awe-inspiring enough to win converts, and the great joy of Pankratios knew no bounds, earning him the respect of even those who hesitated to join the ranks of Christians.

It seems that the Messiah had no sooner departed this earth than there started to appear false prophets here and there and, unfortunately for Pankratios, one such rabble rouser emerged to set

himself up as a spurious spiritual leader, finding followers among the hesitant and the easily misled. This affront to God was named Montanos, reputed to have been a Christian priest, perhaps gone mad, whose fanatical followers come to be known as Montanists clinging to the utterances of this chief much as did that unfortunate band in Guyana twenty centuries later.

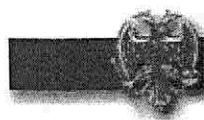
Driven by their leader not to destroy themselves but to destroy Pankratios, the envy of Montanos, a group of assassins stormed into the Church of Pankratios and brutally murdered him. The courageous bishop of Sicily gave his life for Christ on July 9.

from **Orthodox Saints**, v. 3  
by Fr George Poulos, Holy Cross Orthodox Press

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

## St Euphemia

Memory celebrated July 11th

The amazing events following the life of a martyred woman of Christendom have led church historians to subordinate her life story to what was wrought by her spirit one and a half centuries later. The net result is that the revered Euphemia was cloaked in virtual anonymity until she gave her life for Christ in A.D. 308, prior to which it has been ascertained that her life was devoted to the Saviour and that she laid down her life for Him.

So many truly miraculous incidents followed her death that although they have illumined humanity they have blotted out her temporal life, with the emphasis shifted by her fellow Christians, so preoccupied with her postmortem deeds, they lost sight of what transpired in her lifetime. It is enough to know that Euphemia was born in Chalcedon, and after a brief life of Christian service was burned at the stake for refusing to deny Jesus Christ. The lethal flames could not completely destroy her mortal remains which were entombed within the walls of a chapel in Chalcedon named in her memory. The chapel grew into a shrine when it was discovered that earnest prayer involving her name near these walls resulted in cures for the afflicted and though many were to leave disappointed, religious pilgrims came from all over the Byzantine Empire to pray in this small chapel. Enough miraculous cures were affected to assure a steady stream of Christians, each of whom spread the word of the wonders of the chapel in Chalcedon on returning to his respective community.

The magnetism of Euphemia may not in itself have caused Chalcedon to be selected as the scene of the Fourth Ecumenical Synod but as events were to prove, it was very much a factor in assembling hierarchs from all over the empire, gathered where pilgrims from all walks of life had been visiting over a period of years. This momentous meeting is known as the Synod of Chalcedon, convened for the final settlement of a dispute that had been spreading unrest and uncertainty within the Church. It stemmed from the heretical doctrine that the Messiah had but one nature, the divine, which contradicted the concept long accepted that there was a dual nature in Jesus, the human with which man could identify and the divine which set him apart. Several well-meaning clerics, as well as those always on the lookout for a cause, came to accept the single and narrow view of the Saviour, and undiscerning Christians in considerable numbers joined in embracing this heresy.

Nearly 150 years had passed since the death of Euphemia when the Synod convened in the city of her resting place in A.D. 451. The assembled church dignitaries took sides in debate which resolved nothing, since neither side could offer concrete evidence that their viewpoint was the right one, despite the fact that tradition dating from the early days of the Church dictated that the dual nature of Christ was the only logical concept. The proceedings were orderly, but an impasse had been reached and every one looked to the patriarch for a final solution which would bring the now wearying Council to an end so that they could return to their respective parishes with a definitive conclusion. Since any form of compromise offered nothing in the way of settlement, the patriarch pondered the issue and then made the startling proposal that a spirit not of this world that had been performing miracles could be called upon to decide once and for all where the truth lay.

He proposed that a book of each doctrine be placed in a casket of the renowned St. Euphemia, wherein it may by some divine manifestation be determined which was in God's favour. The

casket of Euphemia was opened and the two books placed in her hands, after which all concerned retired to pray for a divine intervention that would guide them in the direction. When the casket was once again opened, the book espousing the single nature of Jesus Christ was at her feet and in her hands was clutched the age old book that spoke of the two natures of the Saviour.

Not even the most adamant of the opponents of the truth that lay in the hand of St. Euphemia could doubt this divine manifestation and the issue was put to rest with the miracle-working saint. The casket of St. Euphemia rests today in the patriarchal Church of St. George which has sheltered it with those of St. Theophan and St. Salome since A.D. 750.

from **Orthodox Saints**, v. 3  
by Fr George Poulos, Holy Cross Orthodox Press

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## Archangel Gabriel

Synaxis celebrated July 13



The archangel Gabriel (meaning 'Man of God') is mentioned in the Old Testament as the angel who helped Daniel understand his visions (Dan 8:15 and 9:21). In the New Testament, it was Gabriel who told Zachariah the hierarch, contrary to all hope and by God's favour, that he and his wife Elizabeth will have a son who would be the prophet of Jesus (Luke 1:11-20). Gabriel also revealed to the Virgin Mary how in her would be born Jesus, the Son of God (Luke 1:26-38). Mary's faithful response, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word", makes her the highest model of obedience to God, because she chose to believe and obey Him firmly.

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

## Bishop and Martyr St Cyril of Crete

Commemorated July 14

St. Cyril led an ascetic life by the end of the third and beginning of the fourth century AD. As Archbishop of Crete, he administered the Church for 25 years. During the Diocletian and Maximian persecutions he suffered torture and was finally executed by sword. Our Church celebrates his memory on July 14 each year.

from **The Orthodox Messenger**, vol 9(7/8)  
published bi-monthly by the SA Central Youth  
PO Box 269, GLENELG SA 5045 AUSTRALIA

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## Great Martyr St Marina of Antioch

Memory celebrated 17 July

St Marina's father was a pagan in the third century, and her mother died giving birth. Her foster mother taught her about Jesus Christ. The faith took root in Marina, and she vowed to remain a virgin and to one day become a martyr. For this, her father despised her and the pagan ruler of the land, admiring her purity, wanted her for his wife. She refused, and when he demanded that she sacrifice to idols, she responded that his gods were dead, did not breathe, and were unaware of honour or dishonour.

She was beaten and bloodied by rods, with thorns, and imprisoned. Then she was suspended, and her sides raked with iron nails. She prayed and to her it was as if another person were being tortured. Again imprisoned, the devil tried to frighten her three times. Once as a dragon he attempted to devour her, holding half of her body in his mouth. Praying, she made the sign of the cross and the beast was torn apart and vanished.

Again, he appeared as a man, black as night. She seized his hair and beat him with a hammer until he left her sight. Again, he grabbed her and threatened to kill her if she would not stop praying. She whipped him, and finally a light appeared from Heaven from a cross. A white dove told her to rejoice for she had vanquished the enemy, and she was completely healed.

The next day, when she would not admit that the pagan gods had healed her, she was burned with torches and then they attempted to drown her in a cauldron. When she prayed, an earthquake hit and a dove landed on her head with a crown in its beak. A voice said receive from the right hand of the most high this heavenly crown. All heard this voice, and they feared and many believed. Before she was beheaded, she taught those close by and prayed. Then another earthquake knocked all the people to the ground. Again, she heard a voice to take courage, and she forced the executioner to behead her. Her relics are now in a church in Athens, Greece, and her hand is at the monastery of Vatopedi on Mt. Athos.

Miracles by her Holy Relics have been witnessed by Christians as well as Moslems.

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

## St Macrina the Younger

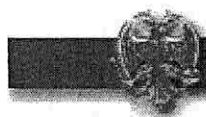
Commemorated July 19

St. Macrina (c.327-79) was the oldest of ten children of St. Basil the Elder and St. Emmelia, and was born at Caesarea in Cappadocia. She was educated by her mother, who both taught her to read and exercised vigilance over how she used that accomplishment. At the age of twelve she was betrothed, but her fiancé died suddenly. After this, although very beautiful, she refused all other suitors and devoted herself to a Christian life. Initially she educated her brothers and sisters. St. Basil the Great, St. Peter of Sebastea, St. Gregory of Nyssa and the rest learned from her contempt of the world, dread of its dangers, and application to prayer and the word of God; St. Gregory relates how St. Basil returned from Athens University as a very conceited young man, and his sister taught him humility; while to St. Peter, the youngest, she was 'father, teacher, guide, mother, giver of good advice', for their father died just as he was born. St. Basil the Great then established his mother and St. Macrina on an estate by the river Iris in Pontus, and there they were joined by other women in an ascetic communal life.

After the death of St. Emmelia, St. Macrina disposed of all her property in favour of the poor, and lived on what she earned by the labour of her hands. St. Basil the Great died in the beginning of 379 AD, and she fell ill nine months later. St. Gregory of Nyssa, making her a visit after eight years absence, found her sick, lying on two boards for her bed. Although she found it difficult to talk, her discussion of the future life was recorded by St. Gregory in *On the Soul and the Resurrection*. Her poverty was absolute and her preparation for death was complete. She died at the time of Vespers after praying, 'You have made the end of this life the beginning of true life. One day you will take again what you have given, transfiguring with grace and immortality our mortal and unsightly remains. May my soul be received into your hands, spotless and undefiled, as an offering before you'. She was buried amid widespread lamentation.

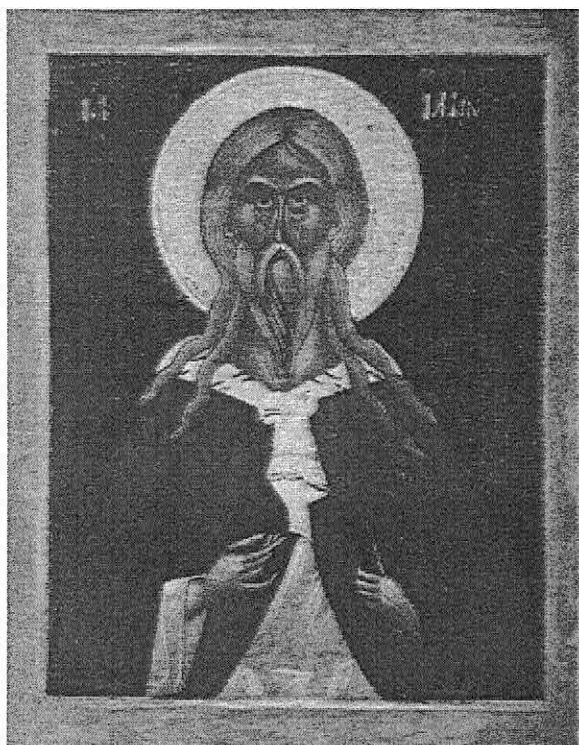
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## Prophet Elijah (Elias)

Memory celebrated July 20



Because Elijah did not die the death of a mortal but was elevated to Heaven by the hand of God, he is venerated as a saint who was a prefiguration either of Jesus Christ or of St. John the Baptist, a point which can be debated but leaves no doubt that Elijah was a man of God much as the mighty Moses. Known as Elias in the Greek and King James versions of the New Testament, Elijah was a major prophet of God who lived in the eighth century B.C. and hailed from Tishbe of Gilead during the reigns of Ahaziah and Ahab, the latter an idolater whom he vehemently denounced.

The worship of one God had weakened considerably among the tribes of Israel and was further debilitated when the worship of the god Baal was introduced by Jezebel, the wife of Ahab. Jezebel brought forth a procession of idolatrous priests and erected temples to Baal, a god of nature supposedly with greater power than even the omnipotent (All-Powerful) God of Moses. Elijah

stormed against the evils of the priests of Baal, who were contaminating the pure worship of God and demoralising the land with their illusions and deceptions and whose princess, Jezebel, was a malefactor of monstrous proportions. He fought the Canaanite god Baal at every turn and strove to revitalise the belief in the one God of the universe, preaching with, an eloquence and passion to those whose faith had waned and bringing many strays back into the fold. He discredited the false prophets of Baal, who turned to the crafty Jezebel for reinforcements and the influence of the throne to turn the tables on this man of God.

Jezebel intensified her efforts to disprove Elijah, who had correctly predicted a three-year drought which ravaged the land, ruining the crops and decimating the herds. He greeted this renewed assembly of priests of Baal with a derisive challenge to test the powers of God and those of Baal, a challenge which the haughty queen accepted, much to her later regret.

The test to decide which was the greater comprised a placing of sacrifices at two altars, one to Baal and the other to God. When all was in readiness each side would call for fire to be ignited, the winner being the one whose fire lit first.

Queen Jezebel herself appeared at the altar of Baal, and her priests were given the first opportunity to call forth the power to light the fire. They appealed to Baal, first in a reverent tone and then with increasing irritation until at last they gave up in disgust. Then the patient Elijah stepped forward and at his first prayer the fire burst forth, following which the onlookers, realising the truth at last, swooped down on the false priests and killed them all.

A further demonstration of the power of the Lord came when Elijah called for an end to the drought and a heavenly rain descended, ending a three-year dry spell that had parched the land.

Thereafter Elijah went to Mt. Sinai, where God had spoken to Moses, and on that holy spot he heard the words of God just as Moses had. He descended with instructions from God himself, among which was the instruction to appoint as his successor a man named Elisha, who later became a prophet of God in his own right. Elijah discovered that God was not necessarily a clap of thunder, a bolt of lightning, or a rumble in the hills, but he could be "**a still, small voice**".

Elijah stood up to King Ahab and Queen Jezebel on many questions other than the worship of false gods, on one occasion daring to challenge the right of kings to do anything they chose without being guilty. This immunity from God's law was used to seize the vineyards of Naboth, killing the owner in the process. Elijah dared to tell him that he was not above God's law and would, therefore, be punished by the Lord.

Elijah is revered as a Saint in the Orthodox Church and is commemorated on July 20.

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## The Holy Myrrh-Bearer Equal-unto-the-Apostles, Mary Magdalene

Memory celebrated 22 July



On the banks of Lake Gennesaret (Galilee), between the cities of Capernaum and Tiberias, was situated the small city of Magdala, the remains of which have survived to our day. Now at this place stands only the small village of Mejhdel.

In Magdala sometime formerly the woman was born and grew up, whose name has entered forever into the Gospel account. The Gospel tells us nothing about the youthful years of Mary, but tradition informs us, that Mary from Magdala was young and pretty, and led a sinful life. It says in the Gospels, that the Lord expelled seven devils from Mary. From the moment of healing Mary led a new life. She became a true disciple of the Saviour.

The Gospel relates that Mary followed after the Lord, when He went with the Apostles through the cities and villages of Judea and Galilee preaching about the Kingdom of God. Together with the pious women -- Joanna, wife of Khuza (steward of Herod), Susanna and others, she served Him from her own possessions (Lk 8:1-3) and undoubtedly, shared with the Apostles the evangelic tasks, in common with the other women. The Evangelist Luke, evidently, has her in view together with the other women, stating that at the moment of the Procession of Christ onto Golgotha, when after the Scourging He took on Himself the heavy Cross, collapsing under its weight, the women followed after Him weeping and wailing, but He consoled them. The Gospel relates that Mary Magdalene was present on Golgotha at the moment of the Lord's Crucifixion. While all the disciples of the Saviour ran away, she remained fearlessly at the Cross together with the Mother of God and the Apostle John.

The evangelists enumerate among those standing at the Cross moreover also the mother of the Apostle James the Less, and Salome, and other women followers of the Lord from Galilee itself, but all mention first Mary Magdalene; but the Apostle John aside the Mother of God, names only her and Mary Cleopas. This indicates how much she stood out from amidst all the women gathered round the Lord.

She was faithful to Him not only in the days of His Glory, but also at the moment of His Extreme Humiliation and Insult. As the Evangelist Matthew relates, she was present at the Burial of the Lord. Before her eyes Joseph and Nikodemos went out to the tomb with His lifeless Body; before her eyes they covered over the entrance to the cave with a large stone, behind which went the Sun of Life...

Faithful to the Law in which she was trained, Mary together with the other women stayed all the following day at rest, because it was the great day of the Sabbath, coinciding in that year with the Feast of Passover. But all the rest of the peaceful day the women succeeded in storing up aromatics, to go at dawn Sunday to the Grave of the Lord and Teacher and according to the custom of the Jews to anoint His Body with funereal aromatics.



It is necessary to suggest that, having agreed to go on the first day of the week to the Tomb early in the morning, the holy women, having gone separately on Friday evening to their own homes, did not have the possibility to meet together with one another on Saturday, and how only at the break of dawn the following day did they go to the Sepulchre, not all together, but each from their own house.

The Evangelist Matthew writes, that the women came to the grave at dawn, or as the Evangelist Mark expresses, extremely early before the rising of the sun; the Evangelist John, as it were elaborating upon these, says that Mary came to the grave so early that it was still dark. Obviously, she waited impatiently for the end of night, but it was not daybreak when round about darkness still ruled -- she ran there where lay the Body of the Lord.

Now then, Mary went to the Tomb alone. Seeing the stone pushed away from the cave, she rushed away in fear thither where dwelt the close Apostles of Christ -- Peter and John. Hearing the strange message that the Lord was gone from the tomb, both Apostles ran to the tomb and, seeing the shroud and winding cloths, they were amazed. The Apostles went and told no one nothing, but Mary stood about the entrance to the gloomy tomb and wept. Here in this dark tomb still so recently lay her lifeless Lord. Wanting proof that the tomb really was empty, she went down to it -- and here a strange light suddenly prevailed upon her. She saw two angels in white garments, the one sitting at the head, the other at the foot, where the Body of Jesus had been placed. She heard the question: "Woman, why weepest thou?" -- she answered them with the words which she had said to the Apostles: "They have taken my Lord, and I do not know, where they have put Him". Having said this, she turned around, and at this moment saw the Risen Jesus standing about the grave, but she did not recognise Him.

He asked Mary: "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom dost thou seek?" She answered thinking that she was seeing the gardener: "Sir, if thou hast taken him, tell where thou hast put Him, and I will reclaim Him."

But at this moment she recognised the Lord's voice, a voice which was known from the day He healed her. This was the voice in those days and years, when together with the other pious women she followed the Lord through all the cities and places where His preaching was heard. She gave a joyful shout "Rabbi" that means Teacher.

Respect and love, fondness and deep veneration, a feeling of thankfulness and recognition at His Splendour as great Teacher -- all came together in this single outcry. She was able to say nothing more and she threw herself down at the feet of her Teacher, to wash them with tears of joy. But the Lord said to her: "Touch me not, for I am still not ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and tell them: "I ascend to My Father and your Father and to My God and to your God."

She came to herself and again ran to the Apostles, so as to do the will of Him sending her to preach. Again she ran into the house, where the Apostles stayed still in dismay, and announced to them the joyous message "I have seen the Lord!" This was the first preaching in the world about the Resurrection.

The Apostles were obliged to proclaim the Glad Tidings to the world, but she proclaimed it to the Apostles themselves...

Holy Scripture does not tell us about the life of Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection of Christ, but it is impossible to doubt, that if in the terrifying minutes of Christ's Crucifixion she was the foot of His Cross with His All-Pure Mother and John, undoubtedly, she stayed with them during all the happier time after the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ. Thus in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles Saint Luke writes: that all the Apostles with one mind stayed in prayer and



supplication, with certain women and Mary the Mother of Jesus and His brethren.

Holy Tradition testifies, that when the Apostles departed from Jerusalem for preaching to all the ends of the earth, then together with them also went Mary Magdalene to preach. A daring woman, whose heart was full of reminiscence of the Resurrection, she went beyond her native borders and set off to preach in pagan Rome. And everywhere she proclaimed to people about Christ and His Teaching, and when many did not believe that Christ is risen, she repeated to them what she had said to the Apostles on the radiant morning of the Resurrection: "I have seen the Lord!" With this preaching she made the rounds of all Italy.

Tradition relates, that in Italy Mary Magdalene visited the Emperor Tiberias (14-37 AD) and proclaimed to him about Christ's Resurrection. According to tradition, she took him a red egg as a symbol of the Resurrection, a symbol of new life with the words: "Christ is Risen!" Then she told the emperor about this, that in his Province of Judea was the innocently condemned Jesus the Galilean, an holy man, a maker of miracles, powerful before God and all mankind, executed on the instigation of the Jewish High-Priests and the sentence affirmed by the procurator named by Tiberias, Pontius Pilate.

Mary repeated the words of the Apostles, that believing in the Redemption of Christ from the vanity of life is not as with perishable silver or gold, but rather the precious Blood of Christ is like a spotless and pure Lamb.

Thanks to Mary Magdalene the custom to give each other paschal eggs on the day of the Luminous Resurrection of Christ spread among Christians over all the world. On one ancient hand-written Greek *ustav*, written on parchment, kept in the monastery library of Saint Athanasias near Thessalonika (Solunea), is an established prayer read on the day of Holy Pascha for the blessing of eggs and cheese, in which it is indicated, that the Hegumen (Abbot) in passing out the blessed eggs says to the brethren: "Thus have we received from the holy fathers, who preserved this custom from the very time of the holy apostles, wherefore the holy equal-unto-the-apostles Mary Magdalene first showed believers the example of this joyful offering".

Mary Magdalene continued her preaching in Italy and in the city of Rome itself. Evidently, the Apostle Paul has precisely her in view in his Epistle to the Romans (16, 6), where together with other ascetics of evangelic preaching he mentions Mary (Mariam), who as he expresses "has done much for us". Evidently, she extensively served the Church in its means of subsistence and its difficulties, being exposed to dangers, and sharing with the Apostles the labours of preaching.

According to Church tradition, she remained in Rome until the arrival of the Apostle Paul, and for two more years still, following his departure from Rome after the first court judgment upon him. From Rome Saint Mary Magdalene, already bent with age, moved to Ephesus where unceasingly laboured the holy Apostle John, who with her wrote the first 20 Chapters of his Gospel. There the saint finished her earthly life and was buried.

Her holy relics were transferred in the IX Century to the capital of the Byzantine Empire -- Constantinople, and placed in the monastery Church of Saint Lazarus. In the era of the Crusader campaigns they were transferred to Italy and placed at Rome under the altar of the Lateran Cathedral. Part of the relics of Mary Magdalene are located in France near Marseilles, where over them at the foot of a steep mountain is erected in her honour a splendid church.

The Orthodox Church honours the holy memory of Saint Mary Magdalene -- the woman, called by the Lord Himself from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.

Formerly immersed in sin and having received healing, she sincerely and irrevocably began a new

life and never wavered from the path. Mary loved the Lord Who called her to a new life. She was faithful to Him not only then -- when He having expelled from her the seven demons and surrounded by enthusiastic crowds passed through the cities and villages of Palestine, winning for Himself the glory of a miracle-worker -- but also then when all the disciples in fear deserted Him and He, humiliated and crucified, hung in torment upon the Cross. This is why the Lord, knowing her faithfulness, appeared to her first, and esteemed her worthy to be first proclaiming His Resurrection.

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## St Paraskevi

Memory celebrated July 26th



St Paraskevi was born in Rome about 140 AD of Greek Christian parents. Her father, Agathon was rich and her mother, Politia, had many attributes, the greatest of which was her charitability. Agathon and Politia had been married for many years but they were childless. They prayed to God to bless them with a child which they would raise in a true Christian atmosphere. Their prayers were answered with the birth of a girl and because she was born on the sixth day of the week, they named her Paraskevi, the Greek word for Friday.

What impressed Paraskevi the most was not her parents' guidance, but the Christian life which they led. Thus, she knew from a young age, the way of life she would one day lead. She obtained her education from secular books and from the Scriptures. She was also very knowledgeable in the field of philosophy. Bolstered by her Christian upbringing and philosophy, she often conversed with other women about Christianity, trying to strengthen their faith in this new religion.

Many noblemen wanted to marry this beautiful, educated and rich woman. Her understanding and kindness made her even more desirable, but having a higher goal in life, Paraskevi rejected any marriage proposals.

When she was 20 years old, both her parents died. Filled with the spirit of Christ and Christian ideals, she sold all her worldly goods and dispersed most of her money among the poor. The remainder was contributed to a community treasury which supported a home for young virgins and widows who had dedicated their lives to the teachings of Christianity. These women had, however, strayed far from the word of the Gospel and, therefore, Paraskevi remained in this home for many years and taught them the true meaning of Christianity.

This was not enough for her, however, and unprotected she went out to teach the way of Christ, knowing that death was waiting for her at the end of her journey. It was during this period that the Jews and Romans persecuted the new religion with the greatest intensity.

She left Rome at the age of 30 and began her holy mission, passing through many cities and villages. She was not caught immediately and put to death because Antonius Pius ruled Rome at this time, and he did not execute Christians without a trial. Instead, he protected them against the blind mania of the Jewish and Roman inhabitants. A Christian could only be brought to trial if a formal complaint were lodged against him by another citizen. However, at one time Antonius had to repeal this law because of the many disasters which had befallen Rome, and which were

blamed on the Christians.

Eventually, Antonius heard of St. Paraskevi's holy mission. Upon her return to Rome, several Jews filed complaints about her and Antonius summoned her to his palace to question her. Attracted by her beauty and humility he tried with kind words to make her denounce her faith, even promising to marry her and make her an empress. Angered by her refusal he had a steel helmet, which fitted tightly around her head, lined with nails and placed on her head. It had no effect on the Saint and many who witnessed this miracle converted to Christianity. Hearing of this, Antonius had them put to death.

Thrown into prison, Paraskevi asked God to give her the strength to face the terror which awaited her. Antonius again continued the torture by having her hung by her hair and her hands and arms burned with torches. The Saint suffered greatly, but had the will not to submit to the pain. Antonius then prepared a large kettle of oil and tar, boiled the mixture and then had Paraskevi immersed in it. Miraculously she stood as if she were being cooled rather than burned. Angered, Antonius thought that she was using magic to keep the contents cool, but the Saint told him that he could test it. She took some of the boiling liquid and threw it in the Emperor's face. It burned his eyes and blinded him. She stepped out of the kettle and went to Antonius, telling him that only the Christian God could cure him. Immediately, he regained his sight and humbled by the miracle he freed the Saint and ended all persecutions against the Christians throughout the Roman Empire.

Free now, Paraskevi went forth with greater zeal to accomplish her apostolic mission. As long as Antonius was alive she taught without fear, however the Emperor died at which time Marcus Aurelius came to power. During his reign a pestilence befell Rome and many people died. Once again the Christians were blamed. The Emperor was forced to change the laws dealing with "non-believers".

Paraskevi was captured in a city which was ruled by a man called Asclapius. Refusing to sacrifice to the pagan gods, she was thrown into a pit with a large snake. The Saint made the sign of the cross and the snake did not harm her. Asclapius, realising that a great and mighty power guarded Paraskevi, she was again set free to teach others about Christianity.

She soon arrived at the city in which she would meet her death. Taracius was the ruler here, and he summoned her to the palace for trial. As Antonius, he also ordered his soldiers to prepare a kettle filled with boiling oil and melted tar and the Saint was placed in it. Once again, nothing happened, and many of the onlookers converted to Christianity. Paraskevi was then tied and beaten and afterwards imprisoned and a huge rock placed on her chest. She prayed to Christ to help her be strong.

The next morning Paraskevi was taken willingly to the Temple of Apollo. Everyone praised Taracius, thinking that he had succeeded in breaking Paraskevi's faith. However, upon entering the temple, the Saint raised her hand and made the sign of the cross. Suddenly, a loud noise was heard and all the idols in the temple were destroyed. The priests and idolaters dragged her from the altar, beat her, and pushed her out of the temple. The priests demanded that Taracius kill Paraskevi. She was convicted and condemned to death.

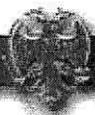
When the Saint was taken out of the city to be beheaded, she asked to be left alone for a few moments so that she might pray for the last time. Afterwards, the soldiers returned and executed the Saint.

St. Paraskevi is considered to be a healer of the blind, because of the miracle she performed in restoring the sight of Antonius Pius.

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

## St Panteleimon the All-Merciful

Memory celebrated July 27



St Panteleimon was born about 284 AD in the city of Nicodemia. His father, Evstorgios, was an idolater while his mother, Evoulis, was a devout Christian. She raised her son, whose real name was Pantoleonta, in the Christian way of life. She passed away while her son was still young.

Initially Pantoleonta was educated in his native tongue and then in Greek. His father sent him to study under the famous physician, Evfrosinos. Quickly he surpassed the other students. He was handsome, soft spoken, humble and all who spoke with him felt true happiness and peace. Because of these virtues, he became well known in Nicodemia. One day he went with Evfrosinos to the palace and it was here that the ruler, Maximian, first saw him. He instructed Evfrosinos to educate Pantoleonta to the utmost so that he could be appointed royal physician.

At that time, St Ermolaos, the head of the Church in Nicodemia, lived in a house with other Christians. He watched Pantoleonta every day as he went to his studies and finally asked him about his religion. Pantoleonta told him that while his mother was alive he had been a Christian, but now his father had made him follow the pagans.

Ermolaos told him that if he believed with all his heart in the true God he would be able to cure anyone with His help. Pantoleonta acknowledged everything he was told and from that time on, he went to Ermolaos for counsel and began to accept Christ with all his heart.

Time passed, and one day, with the grace of God, Pantoleonta saved a child from certain death after being bitten by a viper. He needed no further proof that Christ was the true God. Ermolaos baptised Pantoleonta, gave him Holy Communion, and instructed him in the Sacraments of the Holy Church. He remained for seven days with this holy man, and during this time he became completely acquainted with the teachings and practices of the Church.

Soon, Pantoleonta was working towards his father's conversion to Christianity. This was finally achieved when he saw his son cure a man of his blindness. By the grace of God, the man regained his sight, not only physically, but also spiritually, for before this time he was an idolater. Pantoleonta took the man and his father to St Ermolaos who baptised them.

Pantoleonta distributed his wealth among the poor and then proceeded to cure all who came to him. The only payment the St would ask was that the healed person believe that **Jesus Christ** was their true healer. The other physicians became very envious and wanting to betray the Saint to the Emperor, a group of them went to Maximian and told him that the doctor that he himself had educated was healing Christians and that the idolaters were converting to Christianity. As proof, the blind man who was cured was brought before the Emperor, who tried to convince him that the gods had cured him and not Christ. But it was futile. Maximian realised that everything the



doctors had told him was true. He ordered that the man be beheaded. The Saint secretly took the man's body and buried it in a Christian place.

Pantoleonta was ordered to appear before the Emperor, who described the charges that were brought before him and ordered Pantoleonta to sacrifice to the gods. The Saint refused. The false-priests and doctors begged the Emperor to execute him so that Christianity would not gain in popularity among the people. Unable to change his beliefs, Maximian ordered that the Saint be tortured. First they tied him to a board and tore his skin with iron claws. Then, the soldiers burned him with their torches. The Saint prayed to God to give him strength to withstand the torture. Next the Saint was taken and placed in a kettle but the tar remained cool around him. The Emperor considered the miracles to be magic tricks performed by Pantoleonta. Continuing with his efforts he had a boulder tied to the Saint and thrown into the sea. The boulder became light and the Saint floated on the water. Maximian still refused to recognise the power of the true God. Next the Saint was placed in the stadium but the wild beasts peacefully walked towards him and licked his feet. The crowd cheered and together praised God and Pantoleonta. Maximian was enraged and had all the animals butchered. The miracle served to honour the Saint and to show others the way of righteousness.

The Saint was submitted to even more tortures. He was tied to a wheel and then rolled down a hill. The purpose was to tear the Saint's Body to pieces. Instead, it rolled over several idolaters and killed them. The Saint again suffered no harm.

Pantoleonta decided to bring St Ermolaos to the people, since his words could convert even more pagans to Christianity. Ermolaos and two other men, Ermocratis and Ermippon, were brought before the Emperor who tried to convince them that they believed in a false God. Unable to make them renounce their faith they were tortured and finally beheaded. The bodies were secretly taken by some Christians and buried with honour.

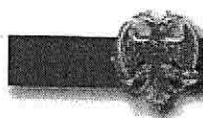
The defeated Emperor passed final sentence on the Saint. He was to be beheaded and his body was to be cremated. The Saint was taken and tied to an olive tree. As the soldier raised his sword to behead the Saint, the sword melted as if it were made of wax. The soldiers fell to their knees and admitted their beliefs in Christ. The Saint prayed for them and forgave them for their sins. A voice came from heaven, saying to Pantoleonta that all he had asked for had been granted and that from this time on he would be known not as Pantoleonta, but as **Panteleimon** (*All-merciful*). He forced the soldiers to behead him so that he could receive the crown of martyrdom. After kissing the Saint, the soldiers beheaded him. St Panteleimon gave his life for Christ on 27 July 304 AD. It is said that the olive tree to which he was tied, immediately bloomed and brought forth fruit. Hearing of this, the Emperor ordered that the tree be cut down and that the body be burned. The soldiers, however, did not return to the palace. They and other Christians, took the holy body and buried it. The body was anointed with myrrh and buried outside of the city in the Place of the Scholar Adamantinos.

St John of Damascus informs us that the remains were transported to Constantinople, however, in the 12th century they were removed by the Crusaders. St Panteleimon is often asked by faithful Christians to aid them in times of sickness. He is believed to take special interest in those who are crippled. He is considered equal to the Benevolent Saints Cosmas and Damianos.

by Christina Dedoussis

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

## Saints Silas, Silvanos, Apainetos and Crescens of the Seventy

Memory celebrated 30 July

The first of the four commemorated on July 30 is Silas, whose close companionship with the mighty St. Paul was enough to place him among the saints and who, as one of the Seventy devoted apostles of the Messiah, contributed mightily to the cause of Christianity, the more so because he managed to elude the executioner and to live a full life, each day of which was pledged to the missionary work of the Saviour. St. Luke, the Glorious Physician and author of the Book of Acts of the New Testament speaks in chapter fifteen of 'Judas and Silas being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed.'

Serving in Antioch with Barnabas and Paul, Silas was chosen by the latter to project their mission into Syria and Cicilia, as recorded in Acts 15.40 wherein it says 'And Paul chose Silas and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the Grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cicilia confirming the churches.' These regions were hostile to the New Faith of Jesus Christ but in spite of the abuse and indignities heaped upon the apostles, the salvation of mankind was brought to crowds who could see the light of Christianity through the miasma of their irreligious way of life. Before he departed for Rome, Paul installed Silas as bishop of Corinth where he served honourably every day of his long life.

Another of the Seventy favoured of God was Silvanos who is mentioned in the New Testament in 1 Peter 5.12 which reads "By Silvanos, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand." The great St. Peter uses the word "briefly" to acknowledge that much more can be said of the Apostle Silvanos, who as the bishop of Thessaloniki encountered more than his share of resistance to the worship of a carpenter from distant Nazareth by a Greek colony as proud of their idolatry as their art and literature. Bishop Silvanos did not find an easily swayed audience in his mission, but he did find audiences with an intelligence to which he appealed with huge success. His was another long service to Christ in a complete triumph of Greek Christian conversion which placed the ancient myths in their proper place, not as truth but as fancy that have since served to amuse readers of every civilised language.

Another gallant soldier lost in the ranks of the Apostolic Seventy was Apainetos whose unfamiliar name is inscribed for eternity in the New Testament when St. Paul states in Romans 16.5, "Salute my well beloved Apainetos, who is the first fruit of Achaia unto Christ." Chosen by the Apostles to serve as bishop of Carthage in Africa, Apainetos met with a Carthaginian crowd which was as hostile as any of the proud Greeks. But with the oratorical skill born of truth, he had remarkable success in the conversion to Christianity of those whose priorities lay elsewhere. The Christian religion became the pre-eminent influence in an ancient city of Africa which was much more familiar with the Hannibals that predated the Messiah by centuries.

The last of the sacred Seventy commemorated on this day, and certainly not the least, was Crescens, whose apostolic merit is to be found in the magnificent St. Paul's letter to Timothy in which he writes in 2 Timothy 4.10 the instruction 'Do thy diligence to come shortly to me ... and Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.' Following his mission to Galatia, Crescens was ordained bishop of Chalcedon, a city in which he firmly planted Christianity as a faith which

found greater expression than in most other areas for centuries to come.

from **Orthodox Saints**, v. 3  
by Fr George Poulos, Holy Cross Orthodox Press

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