



St. Elizabeth the New Martyr

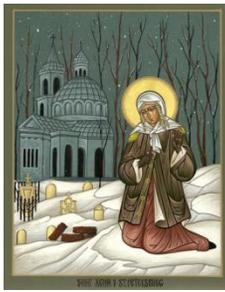
July 5

Grand Duchess Elizabeth, a grand-daughter of Queen Victoria of England and elder sister of Empress Alexandra of Russia (see July 4), was one of the most illustrious women of her day, known throughout Europe not only for her high birth and graceful beauty, but also for her modesty and goodness of heart. After marrying Grand Duke Sergius Alexandrovich, she converted to Orthodoxy, although this was not required of her by her position.

After the assassination of her husband in 1905, Grand Duchess Elizabeth withdrew from public life, founding the convent of Saints Martha and Mary, of which she became the superior. There she dedicated herself to prayer, fasting, tending the sick, and caring for the poor. After the Bolsheviks seized power, she was exiled to the Urals, where she and those with her were martyred in 1918 when they were cast alive into an abandoned mine.

The Novice Barbara followed Saint Elizabeth into exile. When she was separated from the Grand Duchess, Barbara asked to be allowed to join her again; to terrify her, the Bolsheviks told her that she would be allowed to do this, but only if she were prepared for unheard-of torments and a violent death. To their amazement, she consented, and was deemed worthy of martyrdom with the Grand Duchess. Their holy relics were recovered and taken through Russia to China, and came to rest in the Convent of Saint Mary Magdalene in Jerusalem. When their reliquaries were opened in 1981, their bodies were found to be partially incorrupt, and sweet with the odour of sanctity.¹

¹ www.goarch.org



St. Xenia of Petersburg

January 24

Xenia Grigorievna Petrova was the wife of an army officer. She became a widow at the age of twenty-six when her husband suddenly died at a social event. She grieved for the loss, especially because he died without Confession or Holy Communion.

Once her earthly happiness ended, she did not look for it again. From that time forward, Xenia lost interest in the things of this world, and followed the difficult path of foolishness for the sake of Christ.

She began to wear her husband's clothing, and insisted that she be addressed as "Andrew Feodorovich." She told people that it was she, and not her husband, who had died. She abandoned her former way of life and experienced a spiritual rebirth. When she gave away her house and possessions to the poor, her relatives complained to the authorities. After speaking to Xenia, the officials were convinced that she was in her right mind and was entitled to dispose of her property as she saw fit. Soon she had nothing left, so she wandered through the poor sections of the city. She refused all assistance from her relatives, and was happy to be free of worldly attachments.

When she did accept money from people, it was only small amounts, which she used to help the poor. She spent her nights praying without sleep in a field outside the city. Prayer strengthened her, and in her heart's conversation with the Lord, she found the support she needed on her difficult path.

Soon her great virtue and spiritual gifts began to be noticed. She prophesied future events affecting the citizens of Petersburg. She became known as someone pleasing to God, and everyone loved her. They said, "Xenia does not belong to this world, she belongs to God." People regarded her visits to their homes as a great blessing. St. Xenia loved children, and mothers rejoiced when she would stand and pray over a baby's crib or kiss a child. They believed that her kiss would bring that child good fortune.

St. Xenia lived about forty-five years after the death of her husband, and departed to the Lord at the age of seventy-one. The exact date and circumstances of her death are not known. People flocked to her grave to pray for her soul, and to ask her to intercede with God for them. So many visitors took earth from her grave that it had to be replaced every year. Later, a chapel was built over her grave. Those who turn to St. Xenia in prayer receive healing from illness, and deliverance from their afflictions.²

² www.antiochian.org



St. Mary Magdalene

July 22

Saint Mary was from Magdala in Galilee on the Sea of Tiberias, and for this was named Magdalene. When the Lord Jesus cast out seven demons from her, from which she had been suffering, she became His faithful and inseparable disciple, following Him and ministering unto Him even to the time of His crucifixion and burial.

Then, returning to Jerusalem together with the rest of the Myrrh-bearers, she prepared the fragrant spices for anointing the body of the Lord. And on the Lord's Day they came very early to the tomb, even before the Angels appeared declaring the Resurrection of the Lord. When Mary Magdalene saw the stone taken away from the tomb, she ran and proclaimed it to Peter and John. And returning immediately to the tomb and weeping outside, she was deemed worthy to be the first of the Myrrh-bearers to behold the Lord arisen from the dead, and when she fell at His feet, she heard Him say, "Touch Me not."

After the Lord's Ascension, nothing certain is known concerning her. Some accounts say that she went to Rome and later returned to Jerusalem, and from there proceeded to Ephesus, where she ended her life, preaching Christ. Although it is sometimes said that Saint Mary Magdalene was the "sinful woman" of the Gospel, this is nowhere stated in the tradition of the Church, in the sacred hymnology, or in the Holy Gospels themselves, which say only that our Lord cast seven demons out of her, not that she was a fallen woman.

Tradition relates that in Italy Mary Magdalene visited Emperor Tiberias and proclaimed to him Christ's Resurrection. She gave 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 that in his Province of Judea, the unjustly condemned Jesus the Galilean, a holy man, a miracle worker, powerful before God and all mankind, had been executed at the instigation of the Jewish High Priests, and the sentence confirmed by the procurator appointed by Tiberias, Pontius Pilate.

Thanks to Mary Magdalene the custom to give each other paschal eggs on the day of the Radiant Resurrection of Christ spread among Christians over all the world. On one ancient Greek manuscript, written on parchment, is a prayer read on the day of Holy Pascha for the blessing of eggs and cheese. In it is indicated that the 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, therefore the holy Equal of the Apostles Mary Magdalene first showed believers the example of this joyful offering."³

³ www.antiochian.org



St. Brigid of Ireland

February 1

St. Brigid, “the Mary of the Gael,” was born around 450 in Faughart, about two miles from Dundalk, in County Louth, Ireland. According to tradition, her father was a pagan named Dubthach, and her mother was Brocessa, one of his slaves.

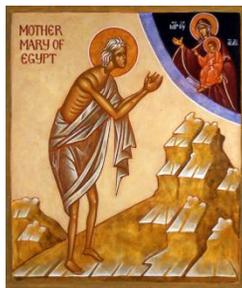
As a child, Brigid was known for her compassion for the poor. She would give away food, clothing, and even her father’s possessions. One day, her father took Brigid to the king’s court, leaving her outside to wait for him. He asked the king to buy his daughter, since her excessive generosity made her too expensive to keep. The king asked to see the girl, so Dubthach led him outside. They were just in time to see her give away her father’s sword to a beggar. This sword had earlier been presented to Dubthach by the king. Seeing her actions, the king exclaimed, “I cannot buy a girl who holds us so cheap!”

St. Brigid received monastic tonsure at the hands of St. Mael of Ardagh. Soon after this, she established a monastery on land given to her by the King of Leinster. The land was called Cill Dara (Kildare), or “the church of the oak.” This was the beginning of women’s cenobitic monasticism in Ireland.

The miracles performed by St. Brigid are too numerous to relate, so only one will be given. One evening, the holy abbess was sitting with a blind nun named Dara. From sunset to sunrise, they spoke of the joys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and of the love of Christ, losing all track of time. St. Brigid was struck by the beauty of the earth and sky in the morning light. Realizing that Sister Dara was unable to appreciate this beauty, she became very sad. Then she prayed and made the Sign of the Cross over Dara’s eyes. All at once, the blind nun’s eyes were opened and she saw the sun in the east, and the trees and flowers sparkled with dew. She looked for a while, then turned to St. Brigid and said, “Close my eyes again, dear Mother, for when the world is visible to the eyes, then God is seen less clearly by the soul.” St. Brigid prayed again, and Dara became blind once more.

St. Brigid fell asleep in the Lord in 523 after receiving Holy Communion from St. Ninnidh of Inismacsaint. She was buried at Kildare, but her relics were transferred to Downpatrick during the Viking invasions. It is believed that she was buried in the same grave with St. Patrick and St. Columba of Iona.⁴

⁴ www.antiochian.org



St. Mary of Egypt

April 1

When Mary was only twelve years old, she left her parents and departed to Alexandria, where she lived a depraved life for seventeen years. Then, moved by curiosity, she went with many pilgrims to Jerusalem, that she might see the Exaltation of the venerable Cross. Even in the Holy City she gave herself over to every kind of licentiousness and drew many into the depth of perdition.

Desiring to go into the church on the day of the Exaltation of the Cross, time and again she perceived a certain invisible power preventing her entrance, whereas the multitude of people about her entered unhindered. Therefore, wounded in heart by this, she decided to change her way of life and reconcile herself to God by means of repentance. Invoking our Lady the Theotokos as her protectress, she asked her to open the way for her to worship the Cross, and vowed that she would renounce the world. And thus, returning once again to the church, she entered easily.

When she had worshipped the precious Wood, she departed that same day from Jerusalem and passed over the Jordan. She went into the inner wilderness and for forty-seven years lived a most harsh manner of life, surpassing human strength; alone, she prayed to God alone. Toward the end of her life, she met a certain hermit named Zosimas, and she related to him her life from the beginning.

She requested of him to bring her the immaculate Mysteries that she might partake of them. According to her request, he did this the following year on Holy and Great Thursday. One year after this, Zosimas again went thither and found her dead, laid upon the ground, and letters written in the sand near her which said: "Abba Zosimas, bury here the body of wretched Mary. I died on the very day I partook of the immaculate Mysteries. Pray for me." Her death is reckoned by some to have taken place in 378, by some, in 437, and by others, in 522. She is commemorated also on the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent. Her life was recorded by Saint Sophronius of Jerusalem.⁵

⁵ www.goarch.org



St. Angelina

July 1 & December 10

St. Angelina was the daughter of Prince George Skenderbeg of Albania. Her mother's name is not known, but she raised her daughter in Christian piety and taught her to love God.

St. Stephen Brancovich, the ruler of Serbia, had come to Albania to escape those who wished to kill him. Before he arrived in Albania, St. Stephen was blinded by the Turkish Sultan for a perceived offense. St. Stephen bore his affliction with courage.

St. Stephen was not only Prince George's guest, but he was also treated as a member of his family. Not surprisingly, Stephen and Angelina eventually fell in love. With her parents' blessing, they were married. After a few years, they were blessed with two sons, George and John.

When the boys were grown, St. Stephen and his family were forced to flee to Italy for their safety. At that same time, the Turks invaded Albania and began to slaughter men, women, and children.

St. Stephen died in 1468, leaving Angelina a widow. St. Angelina left Italy with her sons in 1486, stopping in Serbia to bury St. Stephen's remains in his native land.

The children of these pious parents also became saints – George gave up his claim to the throne in favor of his brother John, then entered a monastery and received the name Maximus. John was married, but had no sons. He died in 1503 at a young age, and many miracles took place before his holy relics.

St. Angelina survived her husband and both of her sons. Mindful of her soul's salvation, she entered a women's monastery. She departed to the Lord in peace, and her body was buried in the same tomb as her sons in the monastery of Krushedol in Frushka Gora.

St. Angelina is also commemorated on December 10 with her husband, St. Stephen, and her son, St. John.⁶

⁶ www.oca.org



St. Kyriake

July 7

St. Kyriake was the only child of Dorotheus and Eusebia. Not only was Kyriake young and beautiful, but her parents were wealthy. Thus a magistrate wished to betroth Kyriake to his son in order to control her wealth. He went to her parents to request her hand, but Kyriake told him that she wished to remain a virgin, as she had dedicated herself to Christ. The magistrate became angry and denounced Kyriake and her parents as Christians to Emperor Diocletian

Upon Diocletian's orders, soldiers arrested the family and brought them before him. He asked why they would not honor the pagan gods, and they replied that his gods were false ones, and Christ the one true God. Dorotheus was beaten until the soldiers grew tired and were unable to continue. Since neither flattery nor torment had any effect, Diocletian sent Dorotheus and Eusebia to Melitene. He sent Kyriake to Nicomedia to be interrogated by his co-ruler, Maximian.

Maximian urged Kyriake not to throw her life away, promising her wealth and marriage to one of Diocletian's relatives if she agreed to worship the pagan gods. Kyriake replied that she would never renounce Christ, nor did she desire worldly riches. Enraged by her answer, Maximian ordered that she be flogged. The soldiers who administered the torture eventually became tired, and had to be replaced three times.

Shamed by his failure to convince the young woman, Maximian sent Kyriake to Hilarion, the eparch of Bithynia. Hilarion was no more successful. Kyriake challenged him to do his worst, because Christ would help her to triumph. She was suspended by her hair for several hours while soldiers burned her body with torches. Not only did she endure all this, she also seemed to become more courageous under torture. Finally, she was taken down and thrown into prison.

That night Christ appeared to her and healed her wounds. When Hilarion saw her the next day, he announced that she had been healed by the gods because they pitied her. Hilarion then urged Kyriake to go to the temple to give thanks to the gods. She told him that she had been healed by Christ, but agreed to go to the temple anyway. Hilarion rejoiced, thinking that he had defeated her.

In the temple, Kyriake prayed that God would destroy the soulless idols. Suddenly, there was a great earthquake which toppled the idols, shattering them to pieces. Everyone fled in fear, leaving Hilarion behind. Instead of recognizing the power of Christ, he blasphemed the true God as the destroyer of his pagan idols. He was struck by a bolt of lightning and died on the spot.

Kyriake was tortured again by Apollonius, who succeeded Hilarion. When she was cast into a fire, the flames were extinguished. When she was thrown to wild beasts, they became tame and gentle. Apollonius then sentenced her to death by the sword. She was given time to pray; she asked God to receive her soul and to remember those who honored her martyrdom. Just as St. Kyriake ended her prayers, angels took her soul before the soldiers could strike off her head. Pious Christians took her relics and buried them in a place of honor.⁷

⁷ www.antiochian.org



St. Sunniva of Norway

July 8

St. Sunniva was born in the tenth century and is the patron saint of the Norwegian Diocese of Bjørgvin, as well as all of Western Norway.

She was the heir of an Irish kingdom, but had to escape with her brother and others when a pagan king, who wanted to marry her, invaded. She and her companions became shipwrecked off the coast of Norway, but eventually landed on Silje Island where they took refuge in a cave. The local people suspected them of stealing their sheep and demanded that they be arrested. Sunniva prayed to God that they should not fall into the hands of the heathens, upon which rocks fell down blocking the entrance to the cave.

Sunniva and her companions died in the cave, but in the years to come miracles were reported on the island. When King Olaf Tryggvason excavated the cave in 996, the body of Sunniva was found intact. Later, a monastery, Selje Abbey, was built on the site, the ruins of which can still be seen.

During the fires in Bergen in 1170-71 and in 1198, Sunniva's remains were taken from the monastery and placed near the flames. This action halted the advance of the fire and was hailed as a miracle.⁸

⁸ www.o.ca.org



St. Mildred of Thanet

July 13

St. Mildred was the daughter of King Merewald of Magonset and his wife, St. Ermenburga. At an early age, her mother sent her to be educated by an abbess at Chelles in France, where many English ladies were trained to a saintly life.

A young nobleman, related to the Abbess of Chelles, asked the abbess for her hand in marriage. Despite a favorable recommendation from the abbess, Mildred told her that she had been sent there to be taught, not to be married. All the abbess's advice, threats and blows failed to persuade Mildred from entering into marriage. Finally, the abbess threw Mildred into a hot oven. After three hours, the abbess opened the oven door expecting to find ashes, but instead, Mildred came out unscathed and radiant.

Hearing of the miracle, the faithful venerated Mildred as a saint; but the abbess threw her on the ground, beat, kicked and scratched her and tore out a handful of her hair. Mildred was able to send her mother a letter, enclosing some of the hair that had been torn from her head; and Queen Ermenburga immediately sent ships to fetch her daughter.

The abbess, fearing that her evil deeds should come to light, would not permit Mildred to leave. However, Mildred escaped during the night; but, having forgotten some ecclesiastical vestments and a nail of the cross of Christ; she managed to return for them and brought them home safely.

Upon her arrival back in England, she landed at Ebbsfleet where she found a great square stone, miraculously prepared for her to step on from the ship. The stone received, and retained, the mark of her foot and was afterwards moved to the Abbey of Minster-in-Thamet and kept there in memory of her. Many diseases are said to have been cured for centuries afterwards by water containing a little dust from this stone.

With her mother's consent, Mildred joined her at her monastery at Minster-in-Thamet. She was given the veil by Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, at the same time as seventy other nuns. Upon St. Ermenburga's death, Mildred succeeded her as Abbess of the community and set a holy example of patience, love and kindness.

An old story is recorded that one night, while Mildred was praying in the church of her monastery, the devil blew out her candle, but an angel drove him away and re-lighted it for her.

In 732, Mildred died at Minster from a lingering illness. She was succeeded by St. Edburga of Minster-in-Thamet. During St. Edburga's rule, the bell-ringer fell asleep before the altar. The departed Mildred awoke him by hitting him on the ear, exclaiming, "This is the oratory, not the dormitory!"⁹

⁹ www.o.ca.org



St. Olympias the Deaconess

December 17

When St. Olympias was still very young, her parents betrothed her to a nobleman. However, the bridegroom died, and St. Olympias did not wish to enter into another marriage, preferring a life of virginity. She inherited great wealth upon the death of her parents, which she began to distribute to the needy, the orphaned and the widowed. She also gave generously to churches, monasteries, hospices and shelters for the poor and homeless.

In the fourth century, Patriarch Nectarius made St. Olympias a deaconess. She fulfilled her service honorably and without reproach. St. Olympias provided great assistance to the hierarchs who came to Constantinople – She attended to them all with great love. She did not regard her wealth as her own but rather God’s and she distributed not only to good people, but also to her enemies.

St. John Chrysostom had high regard for St. Olympias, showing her good will and spiritual love. When he was unjustly banished, St. Olympias was deeply upset. Leaving the church for the last time, he called out to St. Olympias and the other deaconesses saying that the matters incited against him would come to an end, but scarcely more would they see him. He asked them not to abandon the Church, but to continue serving it under his successor. Shedding tears, St. Olympias fell down before him.

After St. John Chrysostom’s banishment, someone set fire to a large church, and after this a large part of the city burned down. St. John Chrysostom’s supporters came under suspicion, and they were summoned for interrogation.

St. Olympias was summoned for trial and was rigorously interrogated. She was fined a large sum of money for the crime of arson, despite her innocence and the lack of evidence against her. Afterwards, she left Constantinople and traveled to Kyzikos on the Sea of Marmara. However, her enemies did not cease their persecution. In 405, she was sentenced to prison at Nicomedia, where she underwent much grief and deprivation. St. John Chrysostom wrote to her from exile, consoling her in her sorrow.

In 409, St. Olympias entered into eternal rest. Afterwards, St. Olympias appeared in a dream to the Bishop of Nicomedia and commanded that her body be placed in a wooden coffin and cast into the sea. “Wherever the waves carry the coffin, there let my body be buried,” she told him. The coffin was brought by the waves to a place named Brokthoi near Constantinople. The inhabitants, informed of this by God, took the holy relics of St. Olympias and placed them in the Church of the Holy Apostle Thomas. Many miracles and healings occurred from her relics.¹⁰

¹⁰ www.oca.org



St. Theodora of Sihla

August 7

In her youth, St Theodora went through a great trial in her family. Her sister, Marghiolita, had a tragic death which affected her deeply. At this point, the thought of retreating from the world blossomed in her heart. She wished to atone for her parents, for her sister, for herself. But her grieving parents did not agree to her decision, since she was now their only child. They entreated her, and, at the proper time, they married her to a young man who often went to venerate the holy sites. After entering into a lawful marriage, they lived together in her husband's house.

St Theodora and her husband did not have any children, so they decided to enter the monastic life. In just a few short years, she advanced in obedience, prayer, and asceticism, acquiring the grace of unceasing prayer of the heart.

When her skete was destroyed by the Turks, she fled to the mountains with her Spiritual Mother. They lived for several years in fasting, vigil and prayer, enduring cold, hunger, and demonic temptations. When her Spiritual Mother fell asleep in the Lord, St Theodora was led by God to the mountains of Neamts. After venerating the wonderworking Neamts Icon of the Mother of God in the monastery, she was told to seek the advice of Hieromonk Barsanuphius of Sihastria Skete. Fr Barsanuphius advised Theodora to go and live alone in the wilderness for a year. "If, by the grace of Christ, you are able to endure the difficulties and trials of the wilderness, then remain there until you die. If you cannot endure, however, then go to a women's monastery, and struggle there in humility for the salvation of your soul."

Fr Paul left Theodora on Mount Sihla, blessing her before he returned to the skete. St Theodora lived there thirty years. Strengthened with power from on high, she vanquished all the attacks of the Enemy through patience and humility. She never left the mountain, and never saw another person except Fr Paul, who visited her from time to time to bring her the Spotless Mysteries of Christ and the supplies she needed to survive.

St Theodora made such progress in asceticism that she was able to keep vigil all night long with her arms lifted up toward heaven. When the morning sun touched her face, she would eat some herbs and other vegetation to break her fast. She drank rain water which she collected from a channel cut into the cliff, which is still known as St Theodora's Spring.

When Turks attacked the villages and monasteries around Neamts, the woods became filled with villagers and monastics. Some nuns found St Theodora's cell, and she called

out to them, “Remain here in my cell, for I have another place of refuge.” Then she moved into a nearby cave, living there completely alone. An army of Turks discovered the cave, and were about to kill the saint. Lifting up her hands, she cried out, “O Lord, deliver me from the hands of these murderers.” The wall of the cave opened, and she was able to escape into the woods.

As St Theodora grew old, she was forgotten and there was no one to care for her. Placing all her hope in God, she continued her spiritual struggles, and reached great heights of perfection. When she prayed her mind was raised up to Heaven, and her body was lifted up off the ground. Like the great saints of earlier times, her face shone with a radiant light, and a flame came forth from her mouth when she prayed.

In time her clothes became mere rags, and when her food ran out, she was fed by birds just as the Prophet Elias (July 20) was. They brought crusts of bread to her from the Sihastria Skete. Seeing the birds come to the skete and then fly away with pieces of bread in their beaks, the Igumen sent two monks to follow them. Night fell as they walked toward Sihla, and they lost their way in the woods. They decided to wait for daylight, and began to pray. Suddenly, they saw a bright light stretching up into the sky, and went to investigate. As they approached, they saw a woman shining with light and levitating above the ground as she prayed.

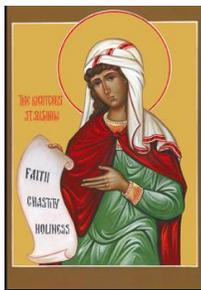
St Theodora said, “Brethren, do not be afraid, for I am a humble handmaiden of Christ. Throw me something to wear, for I am naked.”

Then she told them of her life and approaching death. She asked them to go to the skete and ask for Fr Anthony and the hierodeacon Laurence to come and bring her Communion. They asked her how they could find their way to the skete at night, for they did not know the way. She said that they would be guided to the skete by a light which would go before them.

The next day at dawn, Fr Anthony went to Sihla with the deacon and two other monks. When they found St Theodora, she was praying by a fir tree in front of her cave. She confessed to the priest, then received the Holy Mysteries of Christ and gave her soul to God. News of her death spread quickly, and people came from all over to venerate her tomb. Her holy relics remained incorrupt, and many miracles took place before them. Some kissed the relics; others touched the reliquary, while others washed in her spring. All who entreated St Theodora’s intercession received healing and consolation.

Our Venerable Mother Theodora was glorified by the Romanian Orthodox Church in June 1992.¹¹

¹¹ www.oca.org



St. Susanna

August 11

The Holy Martyr Susanna the Virgin was the daughter of Presbyter Gavinius and a niece of Bishop Caius of Rome. She was raised in strict Christian piety and in her youth dedicated herself to God. Her family was related to Emperor Diocletian, who heard the reports of her virtue and beauty.

Having decided to give St. Susanna in marriage to his co-emperor Maximian, Diocletian sent his own relative, the dignitary Claudius, to Susanna's father, Gavinius, and then his own brother Maximus. Both of them, together with the wife of Claudius Prepedigna and her sons, Alexander and Cythius, accepted Baptism after they spoke to the pious family. Having learned that the entire family had been converted to Christianity, Diocletian sent them into exile.

Soon, those who had accepted Baptism were taken and burned at Ostia, not far from Rome, and their ashes were thrown into the sea. They took the holy virgin Susanna to the palace, and the empress publicly tried to persuade her to give herself to Maximian. But the empress, secretly a Christian, supported St. Susanna in her intention to preserve her virginity for the sake of the Lord. She explained to the emperor about the virgin's unwillingness to enter into marriage with a pagan. Diocletian gave permission to Maximian to defile the holy virgin, but an angel defended her.

Macedonius began to urge Susanna to offer sacrifice to the idols. "I offer myself in sacrifice to my Lord," she answered. Macedonius then cut off the martyr's head. The empress secretly buried the body of the saint. The room where the murder occurred was consecrated into a church by Bishop Caius. In 296, the father of St. Susanna, Presbyter Gavinius, accepted a martyr's end, as did St. Caius.¹²

¹² www.oca.org



St. Eulalia

August 22

St. Eulalia lived in Spain, near the city of Barcionum (now Barcelona). She was raised by her parents in piety and the Christian Faith. Already at fourteen years of age, she spent a solitary life in her parental home with others of her own age, occupied in prayer, the reading of Holy Scripture, and handicrafts.

During the time of the persecutions against Christians under Emperors Diocletian and Maximian, Governor Dacian arrived in the city of Barcionum to rid it of Christians. Hearing of this, St. Eulalia secretly left her home at night, and by morning had made her way into the city. Pushing her way through the throng of people, the girl made a bold denunciation of the judge for forcing people to renounce the True God in order to offer sacrifice to devils instead.

Emperor Dacian gave orders to strip the girl and beat her with rods, but she steadfastly endured the torment and told the judge that the Lord would deliver her from the pain. She was tied to a tree and her skin was torn with iron claws, and they then burned her wounds with torches.

During her tortures, Dacian asked the saint, "Where then is your God, Whom you have called upon?" She answered that the Lord was beside her, but that Dacian in his impurity could not see Him. During the saint's prayer: "Behold, God helps me, and the Lord is the defender of my soul" (Ps. 53/54:4), the flames of the torches turned back upon the torturers, who fell to the ground.

St. Eulalia began to pray that the Lord would take her to Heaven to Himself, and with this prayer she died. People saw a white dove come from her mouth and fly up to Heaven. A sudden snowstorm then covered the martyr's naked body like a white garment.

Three days later, St. Eulalia's parents came and wept before her hanging body, but they were also glad that their daughter would be numbered among the saints. When they took St. Eulalia from the tree, one of the Christians, named Felix, said with tears of joy: "Lady Eulalia, you are the first of us to win the martyr's crown!"¹³

¹³ www.oca.org



St. Zenobia

October 20

The Hieromartyr Zenobius, Bishop of Aegea, and his sister, Zenobia, suffered martyrs' deaths in the year 285 in Cilicia. From childhood, they were raised in a Christian Faith by their parents, and they led pious and chaste lives. In adulthood, shunning the love of money, they distributed their inherited wealth to the poor. For his beneficence and holy life, the Lord rewarded Zenobius with the gift of healing various maladies. He was also chosen bishop of a Christian community in Cilicia.

As bishop, St. Zenobius zealously spread the Christian Faith among the pagans. When Emperor Diocletian (284-305) began a persecution against the Christians, Bishop Zenobius was the first one arrested and brought to trial before Governor Licius. "I shall only speak briefly with you," said Licius to the saint, "for I propose to grant you life if you worship our gods, or death, if you do not." Zenobius answered, "This present life without Christ is death. It is better that I prepare to endure the present torment for my Creator, and then with Him live eternally, than to renounce Him for the sake of the present life, and then be tormented eternally in Hades."

By order of Licius, they nailed him to a cross and tortured him. St. Zenobia, his sister, saw his suffering, and bravely confessed her own faith in Christ before the governor. She was also tortured.

By the power of the Lord, they remained alive after being placed on a red-hot iron bed, and then in a boiling kettle. The saints were ultimately beheaded. The priest Hermogenes secretly buried their bodies in a single grave.

Sts. Zenobius and Zenobia are invoked by those suffering from breast cancer.¹⁴

¹⁴ www.oca.org



St. Melania the Younger

December 31

Saint Melania the Younger, who was born in 388, was the grand-daughter of Saint Melania the Elder. Her father Publicola was an Eparch of Rome. She was joined in wedlock to a husband and became the mother of two children, both of which she lost shortly thereafter.

Thus, having agreed with her husband to pass the rest of their lives in abstinence and chastity, and taking her mother Albina with her, she went off to Africa. They ransomed 8,000 captives; furthermore, they built two monasteries - one for men and one for women - in the city of Tagaste, which was in the district of Tunis.

After seven years they moved to Jerusalem. Thereafter Melania shut herself up in a small and narrow hermitage by the Mount of Olives, and wearing away her body with fasting and vigil, she reposed in 434.

Apolytikion

The image of God, was faithfully preserved in you, O Mother. For you took up the Cross and followed Christ. By Your actions you taught us to look beyond the flesh for it passes, rather to be concerned about the soul which is immortal. Wherefore, O Holy Melania, your soul rejoices with the angels.¹⁵



Righteous Juliana of Lazarevo

January 2

Righteous Juliana of Lazarevo is an astonishing example of a self-denying Christian woman. She was the daughter of a nobleman. From her early years she lived devoutly, kept the fasts, and set aside the majority of her time for prayer. Early on, having become orphaned, she was given over into the care of relatives, who laughed at her. Juliana bore everything with patience and without complaint. Her love for people was expressed by nursing the sick and sewing clothing for the poor.

The pious and virtuous life of the maiden attracted the attention of Yurii Osoryin, who soon married her. Her husband's parents loved their gentle daughter-in-law and left the running of the household in her hands. Domestic concerns did not disrupt the spiritual efforts of Juliana. She always found time for prayer, and she was always prepared to feed the orphaned and clothe the poor. During a harsh famine, she herself remained without food, having given away her last morsel to a beggar. When an epidemic began, Juliana devoted herself completely to the nursing of the sick.

Righteous Juliana had six sons and a daughter. After the death of two of her sons, she decided to withdraw to a monastery, but her husband persuaded her to remain in the world and to continue to raise their children. On the testimony of Juliana's son, Kallistrat Osoryin, who wrote of her life, she became all the more demanding towards herself. She intensified her fasting and prayer, slept no more than two hours at night, and only then would lay her head upon a board.

Upon the death of her husband, Juliana distributed to the poor her portion of the inheritance. Living in extreme poverty, she was nonetheless vivacious, cordial, and in everything she thanked the Lord. The saint was vouchsafed a visitation by St. Nicholas the Wonderworker and guidance by the Mother of God. When Righteous Juliana fell asleep in the Lord, she was buried beside her husband at the Church of St. Lazarus. Her daughter, Theodosiam, was also buried there. In 1614, the relics of Righteous Juliana were uncovered, exuding a fragrant myrrh, from which many received healing.¹⁶

¹⁶ www.oca.org



St. Perpetua

February 1

St. Perpetua was from a patrician family and lived in Carthage. She came to believe in Christ, and was baptized after her arrest as a Christian. A few days later, the twenty-two-year-old woman was taken to prison with her infant son. Also arrested with St. Perpetua were her brother, Saturus, and their servants, Felicitas, Revocatus, Saturninus and Secundulus, who were also catechumens.

Despite the pleas of her father, who persistently appealed to her maternal feelings, St. Perpetua refused to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods.

Before their execution, Sts. Perpetua and Saturus had visions from God, which strengthened their souls. St. Felicitas, who was eight months pregnant, gave birth to a baby girl while in prison. She rejoiced because now she would be permitted to die with her companions, as there was a law forbidding the execution of pregnant women.

The martyrs were led from the prison into the amphitheatre. Saturninus and Revocatus were made to face a leopard and a bear. Sts. Perpetua and Felicitas were brought to the arena in nets, and they were pitted against a wild heifer. After being tossed to the ground by the animal, the two women were led out of the arena. Saturus was bitten by the leopard, but did not die. The martyrs were then led to be killed by the sword. The young gladiator who was to execute St. Perpetua was inexperienced and did not kill her with the first blow. She herself took his hand and guided it to her throat, and so she received the crown of martyrdom in 203.

The amphitheatre where these saints perished is located a few miles from the city of Tunis. In 1881, a room was discovered opposite the modern entrance into the amphitheater. Some say this was a cell where the victims waited to be brought into the arena.¹⁷

¹⁷ www.oca.org



Holy Prophetess Anna

February 3

According to St Luke's Gospel, "And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Aser. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband for seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not leave the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day. And coming at that very hour, also gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption at Jerusalem" (Luke 2:36-38).

Troparion

In the Temple thou didst embrace as an infant God the Word Who became flesh,
O glorious Elder Symeon, who didst hold God in thine arms.
And also as a Prophetess the august Anna ascribed praise to Him.
We acclaim you as divine servants of Christ.

Kontakion

Let Symeon the Righteous and Anna the Prophetess,
that godly pair, be praised together;
well-pleasing to God,
they became witnesses of the Incarnate Lord.
When they saw Him as an infant, together they worshipped Him.¹⁸

¹⁸ www.oca.org



St. Paula

June 3

St. Paula lived in the third century during the reign of Roman Emperor Aurelian. She dedicated her life to the service of those suffering for Christ and brought food to Christian prisoners, washed their wounds, gave them medicine, and buried their martyred bodies.

Many pagans had been converted to Christianity through the preaching of St. Lucillian. However, certain Jews, seeing that he was spreading faith in Christ, reported Lucillian to the Nicomedian prefect, Silvanus, who demanded that Lucillian worship idols. When Lucillian refused, the soldiers smashed his jawbone, beat him with rods, suspended him head downward, and locked him in prison. It was in prison that he met four youths who were confessors of Christianity: Claudius, Hypatius, Paul and Dionysius. St. Lucillian urged them to stand firm in the Faith, and to fear neither tortures nor death.

Eventually, these men were brought to trial, found guilty and thrown into a red-hot furnace. Suddenly, rain fell and extinguished the flames, and the martyrs remained unharmed. The governor sentenced them to death, sending them to Byzantium to be executed. The holy youths were beheaded by the sword, and St. Lucillian was nailed to a cross. Throughout their tortures, St. Paula was by their side.

After the death of St. Lucillian and the four young men, St. Paula returned to Nicomedia and continued with her holy service. However, she was ultimately betrayed as being a Christian. St. Paula was arrested and cast into a furnace, but by the power of God she remained unharmed. She was then returned to Byzantium, where she was beheaded.

Troparion

Like a radiant star you shone out of the night of error, Slaying the crafty enemy, O Lucillian.
Together with Holy Paula and the four youths. Pray to Christ our God to save our souls!

Kontakion

On approaching the fire You were not burned, O Lucillian wise and courageous martyr, For You received the refreshing dew of God. Therefore You work wonders beyond nature in joy,
Together with the holy children remember us.¹⁹

¹⁹ www.oca.org



St. Barbara

December 4

The Holy Great Martyr Barbara lived during the reign of Emperor Maximian. Her father, the pagan Dioscorus, was a rich man in the Syrian city of Heliopolis. After the death of his wife, he devoted himself to his only daughter.

Realizing Barbara's extraordinary beauty, Dioscorus hid her from the eyes of strangers. He built a tower where only her pagan teachers were allowed to see her. From the tower, there was a view of hills stretching into the distance. By day she was able to gaze upon the wooded hills, the swiftly flowing rivers, and the meadows covered with a blanket of flowers; by night the harmonious and majestic heavens twinkled and provided a spectacle of inexpressible beauty. Soon she began to ask herself questions about the Creator of so splendid a world. Gradually, she became convinced that the soulless idols were merely the work of human hands. Although her father and teachers offered them worship, she realized that the idols could not have made the surrounding world. The desire to know the True God so consumed her soul that Barbara decided to devote all her life to this goal, and to spend her life in virginity.

The fame of Barbara's beauty spread throughout the city, and many sought her hand in marriage. Despite the entreaties of her father, she refused all of them. Barbara warned her father that his persistence might separate them forever. Dioscorus decided that his daughter's temperament had been affected by her life of seclusion. He therefore permitted her to leave the tower and gave her full freedom in her choice of friends and acquaintances. Barbara met young Christian maidens in the city, and they taught her about the Creator of the world, the Trinity, and the Divine Logos. Through the Providence of God, a priest arrived from Alexandria disguised as a merchant. After instructing her in the mysteries of the Christian Faith, he baptized Barbara, then returned to his own country.

At this same time, a luxurious bathhouse was being built at Dioscorus's home. By his orders, the workers prepared two windows on the south side, but Barbara, taking advantage of her father's absence, asked them to make a third window, thereby forming a Trinity of light. On one of the walls of the bathhouse, Barbara traced a cross into the marble with her finger. Later, her footprints came to be imprinted on the stone steps. The water of the bathhouse had great healing power, with St. Simeon Metaphrastes comparing it to the stream of Jordan and the Pool of Siloam.

When Dioscorus returned and saw the changes to the bathhouse, Barbara told him about

how she had come to know about the saving power of the Son of God and the futility of worshipping idols. Dioscorus became enraged, grabbing a sword and almost striking her with it. Barbara fled, but her father rushed after her. His path became blocked by a hill, which opened up and concealed St. Barbara in a crevice.

After a long and fruitless search for his daughter, Dioscorus encountered two shepherds on the same hill. One of them showed him the cave where St. Barbara had hidden. Dioscorus found his daughter, beat her, and placed her under guard, attempting to wear her down with hunger. Finally, he handed her over to the prefect of the city, Martianus. St. Barbara was beaten incessantly. By night, she prayed fervently to her Heavenly Bridegroom, and the Savior Himself appeared and healed her wounds. Upon seeing that her wounds were healed, she was subjected to new tortures. In the crowd where Barbara was being tortured was a virtuous Christian woman, Juliana. Her heart was filled with sympathy for the voluntary martyrdom of the beautiful young woman, and she also wanted to suffer for Christ. Juliana began to denounce the torturers in a loud voice, and they seized her.

Both women were repeatedly tortured. Their bodies were raked and wounded with hooks, and they were led naked through the city amidst derision and jeers. Through the prayers of St. Barbara, the Lord sent an angel who covered the nakedness of the holy martyrs with a splendid robe. Shortly thereafter, Sts. Barbara and Juliana were beheaded, with Dioscorus himself delivering the fatal blow to his own daughter. The wrath of God was not slow to punish both Martianus and Dioscorus – they were killed after being struck by lightning.²⁰

²⁰ www.oca.org