

February 6

D. Our Ven. Father Bucolus, Bishop of Smyrna

St. Bucolus was the disciple of Apostle John the Theologian and was installed as the first bishop of the church in Smyrna. "Shining with the light of the priesthood", he through the grace of God converted many pagans to Christ and died in peace, having charged his flock to St. Polycarp.

Martyr Julian

He came from the Phoenician city of Emesa and was a physician. His farewell was with the knowledge of his execution with Bishop Silvanus, Deacon Luke and Reader Mocius (see Jan. 29) after it was discovered that he was a Christian. He was seized for torture and died after his ordeal in the year 312, being imprisoned in a narrow gorge.

Virgin Martyr Fausta and with her Evilasius and Maximus

They suffered in Cyzicus (in Mysia) between the years 305-311 during the persecution of Diocletian. The unconquerable firmness of the virgin Fausta in undergoing the tortures invented for her by the aging pagan priest Evilasius, and her refusal to worship idols, disposed the same priest to accept the faith in Christ and the martyr's crown. When these martyrs were thrown into the boiler filled with boiling sulfur and tar and prayed for the governor Maximus who condemned them to this torture, he threw himself into the fired up boiler and together with Fausta and Evilasius died as martyrs for their faith in Christ.

Virgin Martyr Dorothy and the Holy Women with her Christina and Callista and Theophilus

The Holy Virgin Dorothy came from Caesarea in Cappadocia. The governor of the province, having found out that St. Dorothy was a Christian, demanded that she appear in his court and for a long time tried to convince her to renounce Christ. Not successful at this, he sent St. Dorothy to two women who were sisters, Christina and Callista, who renounced Christ from their fear of torture, so that they may get Dorothy to worship idols. But Christina and Callista, after the admonishment of St. Dorothy, converted back and confessed Christ, and for this their backs were tied together and they were burnt in the fire-barrel. After that they and St. Dorothy were subjected to brutal torture and then were beheaded. The same death was also accepted by the scholastic Theophilus, who converted to Christ through a wonderful sign after the prayer of St. Dorothy. The Holy Martyrs suffered in Caesarea in Cappadocia in year 288 or 300. The relics of St. Dorothy

repose in Rome in the church by her name, and her head is in the church of the Mother of God also in Rome.

Holy Virgins Martha, Maria and the youthful Venerable Martyr Lycarion

They all were voluntarily caused to suffer for Christ. After long and various tortures they were crucified on crosses and then were beheaded. The Holy Women Martyrs were sisters of the same mother. The youth Lycarion, according to one story was their brother, and according to others was their school mate.

St. Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople



The great theologian and fearless defender of Orthodoxy came from a well-known family and held the position of state secretary. Having a great mind Photius possessed enormous information on Holy Scripture, theology, history, philosophy, literature, mathematics and even medicine. However brilliant was his secular life at the court, he was not fond of it and since his youth he was inclined to the spiritual life and the quiet cultivation of the sciences, vowed to live a celibate life, wishing to devote himself to monasticism. In 858, Photius was consecrated to the rank of Patriarch of Constantinople. He had been resisting this assignment and only the will and the persistent requests of the emperor forced him to come to the throne to which there was no one else better to occupy. In the rank of hierarch Photius became glorified for piety, by his godly enlightenment, and by his ascetic effort on the decision of the Seventh Ecumenical Council for the defense of the veneration of icons. He did much work in correcting the destruction and the abuse by the iconoclasts of monasteries, churches, icons and so forth. He always and before all fervently stood up for the interests of Orthodoxy and stigmatized vices and crimes, not being frightened even by the powers of this world. He was distinguished by his trusteeship for the charitable establishments, which were then managed by the church, and by his personal charitableness as was shown by him especially on feast days. He zealously cared for the planting and spread of Christianity among the Slavonic people (see May, 11). The broad missionary activity of Photius has touched even our remote and at that time wild country. As the adherent of the Christian enlightening influence of Byzantium, Photius sent the most hopeful of his bishops for the formation of the Rus to Christianity. This bishop-missionary performed his ascetic effort all the more probably among the Rus on the Taman Peninsula (Tmutorokan) across the Azov Bosphorus (Kerch). From these Rus Christianity was able to penetrate through Taurida even to Kievan Rus. Thus Photius was the founder of our formation in Christianity and planter of the first seeds of the Christian faith falling on Russian soil even up to the Holy Equal to the Apostles Prince Vladimir. Our existing ancient scribe at that time postulates that even Vladimir accepted the first Metropolitan and Bishops from Photius, and there is an echo of a tradition about Photius as the founder and the first announcer of the formation of the Rus in the Christian faith. Through Photius, who lifted up the

education levels in Byzantium, we are also much obliged for the enlightenment revealed to those following Christianity in Bulgaria as well, and for us the remarkable powers during the reign of Yaroslav and during the time closest after him. As the zealous advocate of Orthodoxy, Photius more than once attracted to himself the malice of enemies and suffered them not a little. The Roman Popes autocratically and innocently even excommunicated him, and the Emperor Basil the Macedonian exiled him in 867 to an imprisonment. But Photius endured all this with Christian courage and patience. In 879, Photius was again called to the patriarchal throne, but, because of the intrigues of his enemies, was again removed to one Armenian monastery. The remaining days of this courageous advocate of Orthodoxy was carried out in solitude and in the ascetic efforts of Christian piety. He died on February 6, 891 at about 75 years of age. Photius left many works in which he accused the Latins of errors, and denied the false teachings of his contemporaries and so forth. His "Library" is a catalogue of 224 writers whom he regarded as especially remarkable and for whom he has made abstracts, and the "Nomocanon" is the systematic collection of canons and civil laws accepted by the Eastern Church.

John the prophet and the Ven. Barsanuphius (at the end of 4th or at the beginning of the 5th Century)

The Ven. Barsanuphius was born in Egypt of poor Christian parents. In his youth he especially liked to read and study the Holy Scriptures and burned with desire for an ascetic life. After the death of his parents he was no longer connected to earthly bonds, went to Palestine where, in the hermitage of Marcellus, developed a love for solitude and the art of silence with which he subsequently amazed all. Following the instruction of God, he settled in the hermitage of the Ven. Seridus (see Aug. 13). After a few years, wishing for full solitude, in order to perfect his quietness to abide in continuous dialogue with God, all the thoughts of his soul being immersed in contemplation of His eternal perfections, he left the hermitage for the wilderness and settled in lonely cell constructed for him near the hermitage, abiding in deepest silence, accepting no one for himself, not seeing anyone. Only the Ven. Seridus had access to his cell, at an agreed upon time bringing poor food to him and tablets with questions from people, desiring to receive spiritual counsel and direction from Barsanuphius. Through the Ven. Seridus he answered these questions.

After some years the Ven. Barsanuphius transferred to another cell also built near the coenobitic Monastery, and in his first cell another monk settled, also a great man of faith, John called the prophet, living until then in the hermitage and who left it for the supreme ascetic effort. Where the prophet John was born and in what monastery he began his ascetic efforts is not known. Having settled in the cell of the Ven. Barsanuphius, John also enclosed himself and without leaving it practiced asceticism in it for 18 years then, knowing his death beforehand, peacefully departed to the Lord.

After the death of the Ven. John, Ven. Barsanuphius became a completely silent hermit and only for the blessing of the church did he leave silence: according to the will of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, he traveled to the Emperor Justinian who wanted to persecute those who would not agree to accept the ideas of the Aphthartodocetae. The emperor, convinced of the eminence of the life and words of the Holy Father, abandoned his intention and sent gifts for the Jerusalem church with the man of faith. On the way of his return Barsanuphius visited the holy places and in Gethsemane having felt the approach of death, received Holy Communion, departed to the mount of Golgotha and turned his soul over to God.

Ven. Barsanuphius from his very first step on the way of asceticism and up to his death bore his ascetic efforts of sufferance of evil and patience. Having firmly decided not to have rest and comfort in his life, to add sorrow and straightness to all, he already in the first years of his ascetical life, zealous for church services and prayer, earnest and diligent in all obediences, limiting himself in all necessities - in food, sleep, rest, allowed conversations, at the same time imposed on himself additional work and efforts. With these occupations he overcame weariness. His prayer was especially fervent which he continuously incorporated with crying and tears. He sustained severe abuse with the spirit of rage. Barsanuphius was exposed to severe bodily illnesses, but underwent them with such firmness, such patience, that he not only did not lie down on his couch for the placation and simplification of his suffering, but also did not leave his handiwork. Abiding without leaving his enclosed cell, he, in his external repose, also found full internal and sincere repose. In him any passionate movement and subtlety fell asleep, peace was revealed in his thoughts, gathered as one and inclined to God; even bodily necessities weakened in the ascetic, and he discovered extraordinary abstinence. He ate sometimes twice a week, sometimes once, and sometimes approached food as though already sated. Among the crown of virtues and moral perfections of the Ven. Barsanuphius especially brightly shone humility, love for God and love for neighbor. The salvation of his brother is as close and dear to him, as his own salvation, and he prayed day and night for the spiritual good and salvation of his brethren. He in all fullness possessed the gift of spiritual reasoning; he was bestowed the gift of insight and foresight of the future by God and in his soul knew the spiritual predisposition of the people. He abundantly possessed even the gift of miracle, and he did many wonderful healings in the name of Jesus.

Ven. John was as great man of faith as was Ven. Barsanuphius. And his ascetic exploits were as great as that of Barsanuphius, and he achieved moral perfection, and was honored with the same gifts of grace as this great starets. Among his spiritual gifts Ven. John, as well as Ven. Barsanuphius, abundantly possessed the gift of spiritual reasoning and the power of wonderworking. Mainly he showed the gift of insight, and for this he was called prophet or seer. The Hegumen Seridus, himself a great ascetic, gave this response about Ven. John to his brethren: "I never saw this starets smile, or be confused, or without tears when

partaking holy communion, when he said: "O Lord, let me not come before this holy judgment seat".

Sts. Barsanuphius and John, for the edification and spiritual benefit of Christians, left an excellent work: "Answers to questions of disciples and lay people". Some answers were written by John, but the major portion belongs to Barsanuphius. Their whole collection presents 850 responses in the book. The responses of Barsanuphius and John were given to questions from people of various rank and position: to the ascetic-anchorites, those living in boarding houses, bishops, priests, monks, commanders, judges and other Christ-loving laymen. Answers were given in agreement with the spiritual condition of the questioner, according to this or that need. The main subject of all the responses is the internal person, soul, heart, conscience, putting off of the old man and putting on the new. The answers of Ven. Barsanuphius and John are full of anointing of grace and spiritual power. The book of these answers is "the teacher of patience, the destroyer of complaints, the sword cutting the will, the axe striking a blow against flattery, the guide to true and perfect humility, teaching us to consider ourselves as nothing, the prophetic of repentance, the mother of sorrow and mediatrix for the salvation of souls and perfection in Christ". When the book of answers was published in the Slavonic and Russian languages, pious Christians with spiritual thirst began to read it and were edified in salvation by it. For many adherents of moral perfection it became the necessary book. This book (under the title: "Ven. Fathers Barsanuphius the Great and John Guidance for the Spiritual Life in Questions and Answers of Students", translated from Greek into Russian) was published (the third edition) by the Optina Monastery (Kaluga Diocese) in 1892. (Note: An English version is published by St. Vladimir's Seminary Press under the title "Letters from the Desert, Barsanuphius and John, translated by John Chryssavgis, 2003).

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 71-73
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