

May 21

F. ✙ Holy Great Sovereign and Equal-of-the-Apostles Constantine and Helena



"The first Emperor of Christians", Constantine, was the son of the Roman Emperor Constantius Chlorus and St. Helena, the heir of his father after his death in 306. He was distinguished by his mind, a beautiful body and physical strength. The Lord bestowed on him "the wisdom of Solomon and the meekness of David" and he ruled his subjects like his father with love and meekness and did not persecute Christians. Meanwhile the remaining parts of the empire suffered affliction under the yoke of cruel masters. The Romans, not having the strength to bear the afflictions of their governor Maxentius, petitioned Constantine to deliver them of their torturer and that they would accept his rule. In 312 St. Constantine under the saving sign of the Cross, wonderfully shown to him in the sky (with an inscription: "By this [sign] conquer"), he conquered Rome and the Italy of Maxentius came under his sole authority. After this St. Constantine not only believed in Christ but also confessed Him before all the people who were his subjects, having adopted all measures to weaken and destroy paganism. In 323 having defeated Licinius, the Eastern governor who persecuted Christians, St. Constantine became the sole ruler and declared the Christian faith dominant within the empire. He was "the praise of emperors", "the glory of Romans, the wealth and advocate of orphans and widows, protection of the meek, and indefatigably restored the afflicted and was truly the deliverer of captives". He tried to elevate the servers of the church of Christ giving them rights and advantages, created temples, cared about the tranquility of the Church and in 325 he convened the Ecumenical Council in Nicaea concerning the heresy of Arius. St. Constantine was baptized shortly before his death at the age of 65 in Nicomedia in 337.

The Holy Equal-of-the-Apostles Helena, mother of St. Constantine, after nurturing her son, "shining with the light of divine rule", abandoned the "service to abominable and vain dead idols", rejected "the ignorance of the deepest dark and cruel godless storm" and did not hesitate to accept Christianity. She was known for her charity and fervor for the temples of God. With this goal not considering her declining years, she traveled to Jerusalem where she had the greatest comfort to find the Cross of Christ in 326. She built temples in Bethlehem, on the Mount of Olives and other holy places. She died at the age of 80 years in 327.

Troparion, tone 8

**Having beheld the image of Your Cross in the heavens,
And like Paul not receiving the call from men,**

**Your apostle among emperors, O Lord;
Set your hand ruling over the city:
That he always preserved in peace,
Through the prayers of the Theotokos,
O only Lover of Mankind.**

Kontakion, tone 3

**Today Constantine and his mother Helena
Reveal the cross as the all-revered tree,
For it confused all the Jews;
As a weapon of faithful emperors against their enemies,
As a mighty sign it appeared to us
And is fearsome in battle.**

In the Horologion, published by the Kievan-Monastery of the Caves Laura in 1642, there is this magnification:

**We magnify you,
O holy right-believing and equal-of-the-apostles sovereigns, Constantine and Helena,
And we honor your holy memory,
For by Holy Baptism you have enlightened the whole universe.**

Paramoia 1) 3 Kg. 8:22-23, 27-30. 2) Ex. 61:10, 11; 62:1-5. 3) Ex. 60:1-16. **Matins Gospel:** Jn. 10:9-16; sel. 36. **Epistle:** Gal. 1:11-19; sel. 200. If it be Pentecost: Acts 26:1-5, 12-20; sel. 49. **Gospel:** Jn. 10:1-9; sel. 35.

See in the Ustav [Typikon]: If the commemoration of St. Constantine falls on Ascension or on the Sunday of the Holy Fathers, sing his service as for John the Theologian, according to same chapters.

+ Meeting of the Wonder-working Vladimir Icon of the All-Holy Theotokos

According to tradition the Vladimir icon of the Mother of God, was written by the Evangelist Luke. Satisfying the pious desire of the earliest Christians, the holy apostle with brush on a board depicted the image of the Mother of God with the eternal Child in her hands.

One of the chronicles tells of this in this manner: "the Apostle Luke elegantly seeing that the Mother of God and other similar sketches in the paradigm of the average measurements of age".

When the divinely wise writer brought this and two other icons written by him to the Holy Virgin Theotokos, after having looked upon on them she repeated the prophetic words she related to the righteous Elizabeth: "henceforth all generations will call me blessed", having added the words: "with these holy icons

is my grace and power". One of these three icons according to tradition is the icon called "Vladimir".

In the middle of the 5th century it was brought from Jerusalem to Constantinople, but in the middle of the 12th century it was sent by the Constantinopolitan patriarch to Great Prince Yuri [George] Vladimirovich Dolgoruky in Kiev and was placed in the Devichy [Maiden] Monastery in Vyshgorod.

In 1155 Prince Andrew Yurevich of Vyshgorod, being sent to the north to ratify his independent domain there, took the wonderworking icon of the Mother of God with him. On the way Moliebens were served and wonders were performed from the icon. When they approached the shore of the Klyazma River, the horses carrying the holy icon suddenly stopped and could not move forward one step. Prince Andrew named this place "God-loving" because "God loves" this place, and here built two stone churches, in one of which he placed the holy icon, and later built a women's monastery here and the city of Bogoliubovo.

On September 21, 1160 the holy icon was transferred to Vladimir, to the newly rebuilt and ornately decorated St. Vladimir Temple and since then it was called "the Vladimir" icon.

Since 1395 (see Aug. 26) the holy icon is found in the Moscow Dormition Cathedral on the left side of the royal doors.

This icon is 1 arshin and 7 vershoks [3 ft. 4.25 in.] in height and a short 15 vershoks [2 ft. 2.25 in.] in width. The covering of the icon is made out of pure gold with gemstones by an old Greek artisan. The twelve feasts are skillfully set around the periphery.

Having become famous for working many wonders, the holy icon gained great glory in our country. Many historical commemorations are connected to it. It was carried from city to city and these transferals mark important periods in the history of our county: Kiev, Vladimir and Moscow.

During the course of seven and a half centuries the Russian people sent up their prayers before this holy icon to the Intercessor for Christians and the All-holy Theotokos many times showed abundant help during the dangerous times of enemy invasions (see June 23, August 1 and August 26). Before this holy icon tsars were anointed for our kingdom; before it the first hierarchs of the Russian land were selected.

Now, on May 21 the commemoration of the wonderworking Vladimir icon is for two events: the first event occurred in 1514 and was the renewal of the holy icon in the house of Metropolitan Barlaam; the second commemorated the deliverance of Moscow through the intercession of the Mother of God from Crimean Khan Mahmed-Girei, who was already within several versts [one verst equals 0.66 miles] from Moscow with a huge army, but, frightened by a vision of the wonderful armies around Moscow, he hastily retreated in 1521. In memory of this wonderful deliverance a cross procession in the Meeting of the Lord Monastery was established in Moscow on May 21. In 1722, according to the Ukase [Decree] of the Holy Synod, this religious procession was cancelled, but that it is

again reestablished and at the present time is not done in the Meeting of the Lord Monastery, but in the Church of the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God on Nikolsky Street in Moscow.

Troparion, tone 4

**Today the most glorious city of Moscow brightly rejoices,
Like the dawn receiving the sun, O Sovereign Lady.
Now we flow to your wonder-working icon and pray,
Calling out to you in this way:
We are flowing to you, praying to you and appealing in this way:
O All-wonderful Sovereign Theotokos,
Pray to the incarnate Christ our God
That coming from you this city and all cities and Christian countries
Be delivered unharmed from all the slander of enemies,
And to save our souls for He is merciful.**

Kontakion, tone 8

**O victorious leader of triumphant hosts,
For we were delivered from evil,
Who came to your honorable image,
O Sovereign Theotokos,
Who brightly accomplish the festival of your meeting,
And as usual we call out to you:
Rejoice O Bride Unwedded.**

Paramoëa and Matins Gospel: see Mar. 25. **Epistle:** Phil. 2:5-11; sel. 240.
Gospel: Lk. 10:38-42; 11:27-28; sel. 54.

*+ Memory of the Holy Right-believing Prince Constantine and his Children,
Michael and Theodore, Wonderworkers of Murom.*

St. Constantine, a descendant of St. Vladimir, the youngest son of Great Prince Sviatoslav Iaroslavich, asked his father to give him the city of Murom inhabited by pagans so that here they may enter into Christianity. Having gone with family, clergy, army and servants, he approached the city, having sent his son Michael ahead to persuade the inhabitants to accept him without resistance. The emissary had a sad ending: the pagans killed Michael and began to prepare for war. But when the prince arrived in the city with a larger army, the Muromites were subdued and agreed to accept the prince. Not forcing pagans to receive the Christian faith by his power, the prince however did not abandon the thought of their enlightenment and first of all built the Temple of the Annunciation on the place of the murder of his son and soon after built the Church of Sts. Boris and Gleb. At the same time he never asked the elders of the city to change their faith; the Muromites were converted by the clergy who arrived with the prince by their

preaching on Christ. And here once a crowd of angry pagans, dissatisfied with the prince, went up to his house threatening the prince with death. Having prayed to God, the prince bravely went out to the crowd of rebels with the icon of the Mother of God. This so struck the pagans that they quieted down and wished to accept baptism. The baptism of the Muromites was completely solemn with the same ritual as during the reign of St. Vladimir in Kiev. In such a way the beneficent Prince Constantine "established the faith" in the city of Murom and "delivered" the inhabitants "from idolatrous temptations" in which his son Theodore was his zealous assistant. The holy prince died in 1129 and his body was buried in the Temple of the Annunciation, next to his sons Michael and Theodore. In 1553 the holy relics of the right-believing princes were found incorrupt and now openly repose in the Annunciation Monastery in Murom (see Vladimir Diocese).

Troparion, tone 4

**Today let us cheerfully exalt Constantine,
Standing before the throne of the Holy Trinity,
Seeing their country shining with spiritual color:
Whom his sons Michael and Theodore followed:
All three of you pray together for our souls.**

Kontakion, tone 8

**Those of his country will cry out in praise,
The orderly Leader and Right-believing Prince Constantine and his sons,
Having him as their chief and intercessor,
For they were delivered from the temptations and defilement of idols.
For whose sake let us call out to him in this way:
Rejoice, O All-blessed Prince Constantine.**

Their Synaxis is done in Murom.

Ven. Cassian the Greek, Wonderworker of Uglich

St. Cassian, in the world Constantine, "the founder and coinhabitant and cohabitant of the Uchma Hermitage and the head of that Monastery, and the all-glorious builder", was born a Greek, the descendent of the princes [dukes] of Mangup [Maknup]. Usually they consider his place of birth as Morea but some think that he was born in Crimea, about 50 versts [33 miles] from Simferopol where the large city of Mangup (sometimes called Mankopom or Mangutom) was before. For his time, Constantine received a significant education and was among the delegation in 1473 to Great Prince Ivan III to Russia with the Tsarina Sophia [Zoë] Palaeologus. He expressed a desire to remain in Russia. The Great Prince offered him "cities and areas in support and land in improvement", but he humbly refused this and held to the modest fast of a boyar during the reign of the Rostov Archbishop Joasaph. In 1488, Joasaph retired to the St. Therapontes Belozersky [White Lake] Monastery (now abolished); together Constantine being weighed

down with the vanity of court life also followed him there. Although in the St. Therapontes Monastery he carried out a strict ascetical life but still had not been tonsured. At first he, despite the admonitions of Joasaph, was also against tonsuring and accepted it thanks only to "deliberate suggestion". At night Ven. Therapontes appeared in a vision to Constantine and commanded him to be tonsured. Having told this to the hierarch, Constantine, according to his advice, accepted monasticism on the next day. After some time, he left the St. Therapontes Monastery, for the Uchma River (about 22 versts [14.5 miles] and founded a monastery there. His glory soon spread to the surrounding districts and they began "many people began to come to him for a blessing and to see the hermit loving residence and to converse with him". Ven. Cassian "fully" accepted everyone, teaching them the spiritual benefit and leading them to the way of salvation "with soft spoken words". He died in peace on October 4, 1504 (according to others on October 2). His relics are in the temple of his monastery (now abolished).

Ven. Martyr Pachomius, see May 7.

Suffering of Ven. Agapitus of Markushev

First for a long time he practiced asceticism as a monk in the SS. Boris and Gleb Monastery in Solvychevodsk, then, following the command of Hierarch Nicholas who appeared to him in dream, he left and founded a monastery in a deserted place on the Markushev and Tarnage Rivers, about 100 versts [66 miles] from the city of Totma. The Venerable One had "a good way of life, applied all his time to abstinence, vigil, fasting, and prayer and very much to the mortification of his flesh, for he always carried iron shoulders like a crown and tied iron chains around his waist, walking this way even up to his own death". The glory of the holy life of Agapitus was spread throughout the area and "many began to come to him, bringing more of the infirm, and he was healing many, for which the Venerable One rejoiced in spirit". Some of the neighboring inhabitants bore malice against the venerable one and he died suffering, killed in 1558 by the inhabitants of the village Kamkin which began hating for the removal of the earth under the monastery. In 1764 his relics were celebrated in the temple of the Markushev St. Nicholas Monastery (Vologda Diocese). Over them hang the chains which he carried after his death.

Orano Icon of the Mother of God

This icon is written in 1629 by the Archpriest Quadratus of the Moscow Uspenie [Dormition] Cathedral according to the wish of a pious man, Peter Gladkov, who lived near Nizhni Novgorod in the vicinity of the Orano Fields, who had a special devotion for the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God found in the Moscow Dormition Cathedral. The Orano Icon is an exact copy of the holy

Vladimir icon. Gladkov brought the icon to his patrimony, the village of Bocheevo. This holy icon soon became known for doing wonders. After some time, according to a special suggestion of God, Gladkov constructed church on Mount Slaven near the Orano Fields where, according to the command of Michael Theodorovich, and the holy wonderworking icon was placed in it. The Orano monastery for monks was built near the church (see Nizhni Novgorod Diocese). The Orano Icon of the Mother of God annually on the Saturday of Pascha is brought from the Monastery to Nizhni Novgorod remains there until June 19 and is returned to the Monastery on June 23. In the autumn the holy icon is brought for a short time to the city of Arzamas.

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900), pp. 0180-0183.
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