

## July 28

### *A. Holy Apostles (of the 70) and Deacons: Prochorus, Nicanorus, Timon and Parmenas*

They were among the 7 deacons of the apostolic church. St. Prochorus, a disciple of the Holy Ap. Peter and companion of the Holy Ap. John the Theologian, was the first Bishop of Nicomedia. He died a martyr in Antioch, killed by pagans for preaching Christ. The same Jews, who stoned the Holy Protomartyr Stephen, killed St. Nicanorus in Jerusalem on that same day together with 2000 Christians. St. Timon was Bishop of the Arabian city of Bosra and died as a martyr. St. Parmenus (according to the Monthly Menaion - Parmenas), according to one tradition died in peace, according to another he was martyred.

### *Kontakion, tone 1*

**You were revealed honorable Deacons,  
Eyewitnesses of the Word, and elect Vessels of faith,  
O Glorious Nicanorus, Prochorus, Parmenas, and Timon.  
Therefore today we celebrate your sacred memory,  
Blessing you in gladness of heart.**

### *✠ Appearance of the Smolensk Icon of our All-holy Sovereign Theotokos*

The image of her wonderful face depicted on the Smolensk icon of the Mother of God is one of the few "first written" according to its origin of the contemporary Mother of God and was written by the Holy Evangelist Luke (refer to May 21) for and at the earnest request of the Antiochian Governor Theophilus. Theophilus placed the holy icon in the Antiochian church built by him for the reverent honoring of the first Christians. After the death of Theophilus, the holy icon was transferred to Jerusalem. And from there in the middle of the 5th century the Greek Empress Eudocia brought it to Constantinople and gave it to Pulcheria, the sister of the Emperor, who put the holy icon in the newly constructed Blachernae temple. Since this time, being a precious artifact of Constantinople and pious Greek emperors, this icon worthy of honor distinguished itself with many signs and wonders, and by the way, with the healing of two blind men who were led to this holy icon by the instruction of the Very Mother Of God and received the recovery of their sight by it, from where it has also been named the *Hodigitria* (ὁδός - the way and ἄγω - I lead), i.e. "She who leads the way". Others explain this name by the fact that the holy icon accompanied the Greek emperors in

campaigns (Refer to the Sat. of the 5th Week of Great Lent). There still is a third explanation: originally the holy Icon of the Hodigitria was in the Monastery of the "Guidance" on the shore of the Sea of Marmara, where sailors sent out to sea were accustomed to pray asking for a parting word and "guidance" for themselves. The monastery received its name either from this custom or on the other hand from its icon.

According to tradition, the Greek Emperor Constantine Monomach, giving his daughter Princess Anna in marriage to the Russian Prince Vsevolod Iaroslavich in 1046, then ruling over Chernigov, blessed her with the holy Icon of the Hodigitria. After the death of her husband, Princess Anna blessed her son Vladimir Vsevolodovich Monomach with this holy icon, who, having become Prince of Smolensk in 1097, presented this holy icon to the Smolensk cathedral temple constructed by him in 1103. Ever since this holy icon has been called the "*Smolensk*" (see Nov. 24).

At the beginning of the 15th century during the reign of the last Prince of Smolensk George Sviatoslavich, during the capture of Smolensk by the Lithuanians, this holy icon was transferred to Moscow and put in the Cathedral of the Annunciation. But in 1455 responding to the intense petition of the people of Smolensk, it was again returned to Smolensk. Moscow saw the holy icon off with tears. On that spot where the inhabitants of Moscow have finally said goodbye to the holy icon, the Novodevichy Monastery (see the Moscow Diocese) was constructed in 1525. And the inhabitants of Smolensk, in memory of the return of the holy icon, subsequently constructed a church in the name of the Hodigitria Mother of God.

During the siege of Smolensk by Sigismund, the holy icon was beforehand transferred to Moscow in 1609, and after the occupation of Moscow by the Poles it went to Yaroslavl. After Smolensk was reunited to Russia, Tsar Alexei Michaelovich ordered the holy icon returned to Smolensk. And because the cathedral was destroyed the holy icon was placed in the Hodigitria Church. But in 1658 in memory of the cross procession on July 28 celebrated up to that time, it was moved from the Hodigitria Church to the Smolensk Cathedral church.

In 1812, on the day of an hostile attack on Smolensk, the holy icon was taken and transferred, like in 1609, first to Moscow and then to Yaroslavl. After the defeat of the enemies, the holy icon was again returned to Smolensk on December 25.

Since then this holy artifact abides in the cathedral temple of this ancient city, protects this city from enemies visible and invisible, served and serves as a pledge of the protection of the heavenly Queen over the Russian

land. Many wonders, healings and signs are known from this holy icon. Many sacred remembrances from the history of the Russian country are connected to it and bear witness to the blessings of God, worked by means of it.

Since 1860, the Decree of the Holy Synod authorized the performance of the Molieben with the solemn singing of the Akathistos before the Hodigitria Icon of the Mother of God weekly on Tuesdays (except in those weeks in which such worship service would be inconvenient and unnecessary according to the church Typikon (Ustav)) in the Smolensk cathedral church before the liturgy, with the blagovest ringing of church bells in a festal manner, according to a special procedure.

The document about this holy icon is currently in the Novodevichy Monastery in Moscow.

Since ancient times in Smolensk there is another deeply revered Icon of the Hodigitria Mother of God written in 1602. During the abandonment of Smolensk by our armies on August 5, 1812, this icon was taken by them and protected constantly in their ranks. On the eve of the Borodino Battle the holy icon was carried among warriors for blessing and encouragement for the forthcoming great struggle for the faith and fatherland. And after each victory over the enemy they offered a Thanksgiving Molieben before the holy icon. In Smolensk this icon is celebrated on November 5 in memory of the expulsion of the enemies in 1812 and the return of the holy icon to Smolensk.

*Troparion, tone 4*

**Let us sinners and wretched ones  
Now run most earnestly to the Theotokos.  
And let us fall down in repentance  
Crying out from the depths of our souls:  
O Sovereign Lady, having compassion on us, help us, and come quickly  
For we are perishing from a multitude of transgressions.  
Turn not away your servants empty-handed,  
For we have you as our only hope.**

*Kontakion, tone 6*

**Steadfast Intercessor of Christians,  
Constant advocate before the Creator,  
Despise not the voices of praying sinners:  
But like the good One come speedily  
To help us who faithfully call upon you:**

**Hasten to our prayer,  
And intercede for our petition,  
For you, O Theotokos, ever intercede for those who honor you.**

*Prayer*

**My All-good Queen, my hope, O Theotokos, Haven for orphans and Intercessor for strangers, Joy of those who sorrow, Protectress of the abused, you see my trouble, you see my sorrow: help me for I am weak, guide me for I am wandering. You know my offense, resolve it as you wish, for I have no other help, no other intercessor nor good comforter except you, O Mother of God, to preserve and protect me unto ages of ages. Amen.**

**Paramoëa** and so forth see July 8.

*Martyr Eustace [Eustathius]*, warrior, suffered about 316 in Galatian Ancyra [Ankara].

*Martyr Acacius*, martyred in Apamea and Apollonia (on the border of Phrygia and Pisidia) and during the reign of Licinius in about 321 was killed in Karyai Miletus. His relics repose in Phrygian Synada.

*Martyr Julian*, born in Dalmatia, suffered for Christ in his youth and was beheaded by an axe during the reign of Antoninus Pius in the city of Atina in Italy.

*Greben Icon of the All-holy Theotokos*

Great Prince Dmitri Donskoy brought this icon, already wonder-working, from Greben to Moscow after his victory over Mamay in 1380 and until now is in the church of its name.



*Ven. Irene of Chrysovalantou*

Born into a notable family of Cappadocia, she became engaged to Michael III. During the trip from her native land to Constantinople she had a meeting with Ven. Joannicius (see November 4), a famous ascetic of Mount Olympus in Bithynia, who stimulated in her the idea of the vanity of the world and led her to devote herself to the cloistered life. After arriving in

Constantinople, instead of the royal palace, she chose the Constantinopolitan Monastery of Chrysovalantou as her dwelling and after distributing all her estate, she was tonsured there. Her asceticism soon brought her general respect in the monastery and made her known to Patriarch Methodius, who, according to the desire of all, installed her as Hegumena of the monastery. Her glory, as a great woman ascetic and exemplary leader, was spread far beyond the walls of Constantinople and led numerous women to become tonsured in the monastery directed by her. The Venerable One remained Hegumena of the monastery up to her very death which followed in 921.

*Ven. Paul of Xeropotamou [Dry River]*

In the world Procopius was the son of the Greek Emperor Michael II Kuropalatos [Stammerer, Lisper]. He was blinded by Emperor Leo the Armenian and after this he secretly left everything and entered the Xeropotamou [Dry River] Monastery on Mount Athos as a monk. Here Ven. Paul practiced asceticism in a small and narrow cell and soon reached such heights of spiritual perfection that many monks came there to him for advice and direction. Having established and built a Monastery in the name of St. George the Victorious for them, Ven. Procopius died in 820.

*Smolensk Icon of the All-Holy Theotokos of the Seven Lakes* see June 26.

*Igritsa Smolensk Icon of the All-holy Theotokos*

This icon was found in 1624 by shepherds of the boyar son Emilian, with the family name Sevriuk of the Isaiev clan, who once, having weary cattle in an obscure place named Igritsa, where the little stream Pesochnia begins (Kostroma Province), found there a dilapidated church in the name of Nicholas the Wonderworker and in it on the holy altar table was the image of the Mother of God. Although the church was very old and close to destruction, the shepherds looking into it, to their extreme surprise, saw the image of the Mother of God as though newly painted. Having returned home, the shepherds related to their lord what they have seen. Emilian immediately sent to Kostroma for his spiritual father, Priest Theodore of the Trinity Church that he visit the place of the appearance of the holy icon and to bring with him everything needed for a Molieben. A solemn procession was made to the place of the appearance of the new icon where everything was found just as the first eyewitnesses described. The priest served the blessing of water Molieben before the image of the All-holy Theotokos. During the sprinkling of holy water on the newly appeared icon, the first

miracle was performed by it: the holy water went into the icon, "as into a sponge", and stayed only on the eyes of the Holy Virgin Theotokos and then poured out from the eyes like a stream. Then the priest sprinkled Emilian with this water, already blind five years, and he immediately began to see clearly. The holy icon at the present time is now in the Igritsa monastery.

*Smolensk Icon of the Mother of God* in the Kostroma Theophany Monastery (see Kostroma Diocese).

*Iug Icon of the Mother of God* is in the Iug Hermitage, Yaroslavl Diocese. In 1615 she appeared to Schema monk Dorotheus, who brought her into this monastery.

*Smolensk Icon of the Mother of God* in the St. Sergius Laura appeared in 1730.

*Shuia Smolensk Icon of the Mother of God*: see July 11.

*Voronina Hodigitria Icon of the Mother of God* was in the former Voronina Dormition Hermitage in Cherepovets district, Novgorod Province which burned down in 1792. She appeared in this hermitage founded by Monk Mark of Voronina in 1524.

*Smolensk Icon of the Mother of God in Vidropus, Novgorod Province* appeared in the 15th century and is now in the city of Torzhok, Tver Province.

*The Christopher Hodigitria Icon of the Mother of God* at first was in the cell of the Ven. Christopher (see July 25), but later in his monastery (now a parish temple) in Vologda Province. She was glorified for working wonders in the 16th century.

There are other known Hodigitria wonder-working icons: one in the Sviatogorsky Monastery, **Sviatogorsk, Pskov Diocese**, appeared in the 16th century; **Ustj-nedumsky** in Ustiug district, Vologda Province, appeared in the 17th century; **Solovetsky Smolensk**, appeared to Ven. Eleazar in the 17th century.