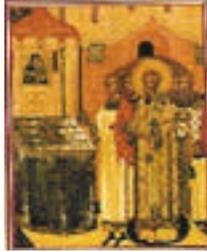


# August 31

## *B + Placing of the Honorable Belt of the Most Holy Theotokos*



Besides the robe of the Most Holy Theotokos (see July 2), her honorable belt was kept among Christians who, according to one story, was entrusted by her to the Apostle Thomas, and then by right of succession transmitted by believers to one another. This festival was established in commemoration of a miracle by the belt held over the sick Greek Empress Zoë. In the tenth century the Empress Zoë, wife of Leo the Wise, suffering from continuous illness, received healing by putting the honorable belt of the Mother of God on her. Then the belt was solemnly placed in a new shrine, and the real feast was established in memory of the miracle. The daughter of the Greek Emperor Romanus Argyrus (11<sup>th</sup> century), married the King of Georgia Bagrat, brought a part of the holy belt with her, which now is in Mingrelia, in a small place called Zugdidi (otherwise Zugdichi), in a temple constructed by Emperor Alexander I. The other part of the belt was stored in the Mt. Athos Vatopedi monastery, in a cross donated by the Serbian Prince Lazarus in 1101.

### *Troparion, tone 8*

**O Ever-virgin Theotokos, protection of mankind,  
You have bestowed on your city the robe  
And the belt of your most honored body,  
Which have remained incorrupt through your seedless childbearing,  
For both time and nature are renewed in you.  
Therefore we pray to you:  
Grant peace to your city and great mercy to our souls.**

### *Kontakion, tone 2*

**Your God-pleasing womb, O Theotokos,  
Was girded with your honorable belt,  
Granting invincible power and abundantly good treasure to your city,  
O Only Ever-virgin who has given birth.**

**Epistle:** Heb. 9:1-7; sel. 320. **Gospel:** Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28; sel. 54.

*Hieromartyr Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage*

The son of a rich Carthaginian senator, he received a brilliant pagan education and was a pagan for 46 years. Teaching rhetoric in Carthage and at the same time a lawyer, Cyprian was not free from pagan sins. But leading an undisciplined life, he did not feel right with himself, and was betrayed by his weaknesses, and hoped to find something better in life. His acquaintance with the Carthaginian priest Cecilius led Cyprian to learn the Christian faith and to receive baptism. This completely changed his life. Within a year after baptism he accepted the call to the presbytery (247), and after the death of the Carthaginian Bishop Donatus (in 248) he became bishop. According to contemporaries St. Cyprian had a serious mien, friendly and sincere. He was handsome in appearance and everyone who saw him immediately was impressed with his character and behavior. In his life he worked hard for good church order and for the correction of the abuse and disorder that dominated the Carthaginian church. During the severe persecution of Decius, at the suggestion of a revelation, he disappeared, but always was in spirit with his own flock and wrote from isolation the letter to Carthage in which he convinced the weak in faith to ascetic exploits, calmed the mighty, however protecting the latter from self-conceit and pride. St. Cyprian was revealed a sympathetic judge to those who fell from the faith, calming them hopefully for forgiveness and unity with the Church under the condition of sincere repentance.

In the year 252 in Carthage there was a terrible plague and during this time St. Cyprian was revealed truly as a guardian angel not only for Christians but also for pagans. Both by his own example and conviction he had Christians assist those suffering from the plague. Each hour Cyprian and his servants went into the tainted city and performed new and newer good deeds: finding the sick, calming the dying and bringing peace with them everywhere where they went. In the year 257 during the Valerian persecution, St. Cyprian was imprisoned and within a year he was summoned to trial in Carthage and suffered for Christ, beheaded by the sword. Before the completion of his execution, he removed his outer clothing and having prayed to God, Cyprian blessed the people and ordered that 25 coins be given to the executioner in a sign of complete forgiveness. Then Cyprian blindfolded himself, before extending his hands to join with the presbyter and the subdeacon standing near him and bent his head. Christians in scarves and towels collected his blood as precious treasure, and that same night by the light of torches, with prayers and great solemnity, buried the body of the hieromartyr in the cemetery of the Procurator Macrobius Candidus. St. Cyprian left many precious writings which, besides the letters, are remarkable: "De unitate ecclesiae (About the unity of the church)", "De habitu virginum (The Dress of Virgins)", "De eleemosynis

(Concerning Almsgiving)", "De mortalite (On Mortality)", "De zelo et livore (Jealousy and Envy)", "To Fidus, On the Baptism of Infants" and "Ad Fortunatum de exhortatione martyrii (Exhortation to Martyrdom addressed to Fortunatus)".

*St. Gennadius, Patriarch of Constantinople* ascended the patriarchal throne in the year 458 during the reign of Leo the Great. He distinguished himself with a meek disposition, chastity and abstinence and vigilantly cared for the improvement of his clergy and the edification of his flock. For his holy life pleasing to God he was rewarded with the gift of working wonders. He died in 471. He is known as an ecclesiastical writer.

#### *Repose of St. John, Metropolitan of Kiev*

St. John was Metropolitan of Kiev since 1080 and soon earned general profound respect. The Ven. Nestor, his contemporary, says the following about him: "this man is an expert in books, skilful in teaching, merciful to the needy and the widows, kind to everyone, rich and poor, humble and meek". St. John died in the second half of the 11th century. He left some writings, of which the following are famous: "Message of Metropolitan John to Clement, Pope of Old Rome" and "Church Canons", written for Monk James with his explanation of the Canons of the universal (catholic) Church in their application for the Russian Church.

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 0306-0307  
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