

# November 23

## *B. Our Father among the Saints Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconomium*



Born in Deocaesarea (Caesarea), Cappadocia, the contemporary and friend of Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzus, he became bishop of Iconomium in 372 and worked much to promote Orthodoxy, denying and accusing heretics. In 381 he was present at the Second Ecumenical Council. After formidable ascetic efforts on behalf of the Church St. Amphilochius died in 394.

### *Kontakion, tone 2*

**Divine thunder, trumpet of the Spirit,  
O cultivator of faith, and mincer of heresies,  
O Hierarch Amphilochius,  
Great one pleasing to the Trinity,  
Ever standing with angels,  
Constantly pray for us all.**

## *Our Father among the Saints Gregory, Bishop of Agrigentum*

Born in Sicily, he was a zealous adherent of true teaching at the Fifth Ecumenical Council. During the reign of Emperor Maurice he was raised to the rank of Bishop of Agrigentum, Sicily. Falsely accused of a grave crime, according to the order of the Pope of Rome Gregory, he was chained in irons and thrown into prison in Rome where he remained about two years, pending judgment over him. When the court wonderfully testified to his innocence, he again returned to his flock and, having a "fire-breathing tongue", and "mouth of sweet words" enlightened "them with the dawn of Orthodox teachings". Leading a holy life, he was glorified for such abundance of spiritual gifts that one touch of a hand healed all illnesses. He died at the end of the Sixth or at the beginning of the Seventh Century. In

the church hymns he is glorified as the "paradigm of chastity" and "confirmation of the church".

*Kontakion, tone 4*

**With bright rays of light**

**The church of the Holy Spirit guides by light**

**The accomplishing of your dormition,**

**O All-blessed Venerable Father Gregory.**

**Epistle:** Heb. 13:7-16; 334 sel. **Gospel:** Mt. 24:42-47; 103 sel.

+ *Rest of the Holy Faithful Great Prince Alexander Nevsky,  
Wonderworker of all Russia.*

The son of Prince Iaroslav Vsevolodovich of Vladimir, he was distinguished by reason, courage, power of bodily strength, majestic beauty, love of truth, co-suffering and truly Christian piety. "From his youth he loved Christ and has turned away from worldly sophisms, he was charmed by the voice of the church hymns and his soul thirsted for knowledge of the Holy Fathers. His favorite occupation was the all-night vigil and silent prayer to God". In 1236, St. Alexander was made the Prince of Novgorod.

In 1240, the Swedes attacked his principedom. St. Alexander was not afraid of the enemies and left to fight against them. Not only by the strength of his army, but as much by faith in the help of God, had he with deep feeling of faith spoken before the battle: "God is not on the side of force, but of truth". On the shore of the Neva River the holy prince gained full victory over his enemies for which he received the name "Nevsky". In 1242, he freed the city of Pskov from the Germans. The same year he won a glorious victory over the Lithuanian knights on the ice of Chudskoie (Peipus) Lake (known by the name "Battle on the Ice"). Then in 1242 and 1245, he gained many victories over the Lithuanians.

Having become the grand prince of Vladimir in 1250, St. Alexander did much work at restoring and building up the Russian land, strongly suffering at that time from the violence of the Tartars, and revealed him the firm defender and guardian of Orthodoxy. He repeatedly appeared in the camp of the Tartar khan to petition him on behalf of his oppressed native land, and by this he not only prevented many afflictions, but also was able to ask the khans for many privileges. The first time being among the Tatar Horde, St. Alexander proved not only to be the defender of the advantages of the state,

but also the confessor of the Christian faith, ready to suffer for it. As to the requirement of the pagan priests to pass through fire and to worship idols, he bravely answered the Khan Batu: "I shall bow to you, for God granted you a kingdom. I shall not bow to created things (i.e. to idols). I am a Christian and it is not necessary for me to worship created things. I worship God, One in Trinity, who gloriously created heaven and earth. I serve Him and I honor Him". The Khan, respecting the courage and intelligence of St. Alexander, allowed him to forgo the requirement of the (pagan) priests.

Being the zealous advocate of Orthodoxy, St. Alexander rejected the proposition of Pope Innocent IV to accept the Roman Catholic confession, having told the representatives from the Pope with unbreakable resolution: "We know the true history of the faith that contains the teaching given to the Apostles, and we do not wish to accept your teaching".

The holy prince was the guardian angel of his people, interceding for them before God, to Whom he turned to in difficult times with prayer for help and heavenly protection to Whom he attributed not a few happy events and cases of salvation from various misfortunes. Not one year of the reign of the holy prince, the chroniclers with awesomeness observed: "that this year was a good one for a Christian". "He labored hard for the Russian land, for Novgorod and Pskov, for all the great reigning even giving his life for the Orthodox faith", the holy true believing Prince Alexander was a most remarkable figure of the appanage-veche period of our history. For twenty seven years the holy true believing Prince Alexander reigned, courageously and immutably standing guard over his domestic country and consolidating her security and prosperity.

The Holy Church in its hymns, singing of the valor of St. Alexander, glorifies him as "the authority of pious kings, and the praise of Orthodox princes", "maintainer of warriors, and vanquisher of barbarians", "who is wonderful in wonders, co-habitant with the fleshless ones", "defender of the despairing".

Heavy labor and ascetic effort disturbed the health of the holy prince. Feeling the approach of death and following the inclination of his heart of always rushing to God, he accepted the schema, taking the name Alexis, received the Holy Mysteries, and died on November 14, 1263 and was buried in the Nativity of Christ-Theotokion Monastery in Vladimir (see Vladimir Diocese). According to legend, before the burial of the holy prince a wonder was worked: he himself took in his hand as if alive the prayer of absolution. In 1381 the relics of the holy prince were opened and placed in the cathedral temple of the monastery. During the reign of Tsar Ivan IV the special service for the holy prince was composed and in 1547 it was

established to honor his memory on November 23 (the day of his burial). In 1724, by command of Emperor Peter the Great, the relics of the holy prince were transferred to the Alexander Nevsky Laura in St. Petersburg where they now repose. See Aug 30.

*Troparion, tone 4*

**O Blessed Alexander,  
Christ revealed you as a pious root of the all-honorable branch,  
The divine treasure of the Russian land,  
A new wonderworker, most glorious and pleasing to God.  
And today we in faith and love assemble in your memory,  
In psalms and hymns we joyously glorify the Lord,  
Who granted you the grace of healing.  
Therefore pray to save this city,  
And to strengthen your relatives to be more pleasing to God,  
And to save the sons of Russia.**

*Kontakion, tone 8*

**We honor you as a most radiant star,  
Rising from the east, and setting in the west.  
For you enriched this country with wonders and good works,  
And enlightened us who faithfully honor your memory, O Blessed Alexander.  
For this reason today we celebrate your dormition.  
We, who are your people, pray to save your fatherland,  
And the sovereignty of our Orthodox Emperor, Nicholas Alexandrovich,  
And everything that flows to the ark of your relics,  
And who faithfully hymn you:  
Rejoice, O confirmation of our city.**

**His synaxis is done wherever his temple is.**

**Paramoia** see Nov. 6. **Matins Gospel:** see Jan. 10. **Epistle and Gospel** see Jan. 15.

*Memory of the First Hierarch of Voronezh Metrophanes, as a  
schema-monk Macarius*

He was born in 1623 in the environs of Vladimir from parents of spiritual calling and in the world was known as Michael. His pious parents gave him a good education in the spirit of the Orthodox faith. Having become a widower in the 40th year of his life, Michael left the world and

accepted monasticism in the Zolotnik Monastery of the Dormition of the Mother of God near Suzdal.

Zealous in ascetic obedience the monk was ordained a presbyter in 1663 and was elevated as Hegumen of the St. Cosmas of Iakhrom Monastery in 1666, and became the Hegumen of the Unzha Monastery within the limits of Galich in 1675. As Hegumen, St. Metrophanes gained the universal respect of both spiritual and secular persons and was known to the patriarch himself. Confirming piety and order within the limits of Galich, on behalf of the patriarch, St. Metrophanes more than once paid salaries to military people out of the monastery treasury.

With the opening of the new diocesan see in Voronezh, the Hegumen of the Unzha Monastery Metrophanes was elected and newly consecrated as its bishop on April 2, 1682. In Moscow the newly installed bishop was worthy to bring to the Patriarch the crown for placing on the head of the royal child Peter. Here he witnessed those disorders made by the schismatics and these left an indelible impression on the soul of St. Metrophanes. The hierarch clearly and deeply understood what great anger was generated by the schism, tearing apart the bowels of the Church of Christ, and at the Council of Moscow he revealed himself as the zealous expositor of the schism. During his whole life St. Metrophanes revealed himself the strict expositor of the ignorant schism, motivating and vigilantly guarding the Church of Christ, protecting the purity of her teaching.

As leader, he was accessible to all and his house was a place of haven for all the grieving, an inn for strangers, a medical clinic for the sick. Rather frequently the hierarch himself went into the city, entered the homes of the sick, and comforted them through faith and hope in the mercy and help of God.

As hierarch, he earned the high respect and sincere love of Emperor Peter who, during his frequent visitations to Voronezh (where on the River Don he constructed a ship yard and gathered a fleet), frequently gave the hierarch money and necessities for the needy. During every trip to Voronezh the Emperor Peter I first visited St. Metrophanes, and always departed from him with new spiritual edification. As a faithful son of the fatherland and admirer of church authority, St. Metrophanes helped the tsar both in word and deed in his concerns for the Russian land. For 20 years he zealously labored for the good of the Church.

In the church hymns he is glorified as an unshakable adherent of the Church Typicon, the advocate against sophistic false teachers, the fearless expositor of predators.

He died in 1703. Emperor Peter I, who at that time arrived in Voronezh, visited St. Metrophanes, fell down before his bed, kissed his right hand, and remained there until the death of the hierarch. He closed the eyes of the reposed and participated as a pall bearer. The hierarch was buried in the Voronezh cathedral church.

The memory of the deep piety and pastoral virtues of St. Metrophanes was piously revered after the time of his death. Not only the inhabitants of Voronezh, but also those who lived afar came to the place of burial of the hierarch and asked to do a Panikhida service for him. Subsequently, when the contemporary generation of St. Metrophanes was replaced by the new, already few knew the hierarch, but the reverent honoring of his memory not only has not decreased, but more and more has increased. Consequently it became rooted in the people of faith that St. Metrophanes was great as one pleasing to God.

The confidence in the holiness of the first hierarch of the Voronezh diocese was also confirmed in the verification of the incorruptibility of his relics, examined at their translation out of the cathedral, during its reconstruction, to another temple in 1718 and returned to the cathedral in 1735. Since 1820 it has been observed that number of those who honor the memory of St. Metrophanes reached massive amounts in their confluence to Voronezh, during which some of the sick were miraculously healed and the rumor of this was spread throughout the remote countries of Russia. The relics of St. Metrophanes were solemnly opened on August 6, 1832 <sup>1)</sup>. At first the relics of the hierarch were found in the Archangel Cathedral, but on June 25, 1833 they were translated to the Annunciation Cathedral where they rest openly on the right side of the cathedral in front of the iconostasis.

*Troparion, tone 4*

**You were revealed to your flock as a rule of faith,  
And a model of meekness in word and life,  
O Humbly-wise Father Metrophanes:  
Therefore even in the brightness of the saints,  
You have shone as the brightest sun,  
With an incorruptible crown adorned in glory.  
Pray to Christ God,  
To save our most pious Emperor Nicholas Alexandrovich**

**And all His dominion,  
And to save your city in peace.**

*Kontakion, tone 8*

**Having labored in corporeal abstinence for the spirit,  
And having made your soul equal-to-the-angels,  
You were vested with the vestments of a hierarch,  
Like the crown of priesthood.  
And now standing before the Mistress of all,  
All Blessed Metrophanes, pray to pacify and save our souls.**

**Martyr Sisinius**, Bishop of Cyzicus, was beheaded for his faith in Christ during the reign of Emperor Diocletian.

**Martyr Theodore** of Antioch, suffered for Christ during the reign of Julian the Apostate, but after the death of the king he was released from prison and died in peace.

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<sup>1)</sup> There are now two feasts in honor of St. Metrophanes in the Voronezh diocese: one on November 23, the day of the repose of St. Metrophanes and the other celebrated on August 7 instead of August 6 on which falls the Feast of Transfiguration, the day of the opening of the relics of the hierarch. The celebration of St. Metrophanes on August 7 is done in Voronezh with greater solemnity than on November 23. In the cross procession from the cathedral and parish churches to the Annunciation Metrophanes Monastery following the liturgy on November 23rd and on August 7th the enclosed relics of St. Metrophanes is processed around the monastery. Annually on this day the crowds of pilgrims are enormous and much more than on November 23rd because after August 7th the pilgrims from Voronezh go to Zadonsk for the August 13th commemoration of the other Voronezh hierarch, St. Tycho (Tikhon).

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 0425-0428  
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