

November 24

A. † Holy Great Martyr Catherine.



She was a princess born in Alexandria and was endowed with unusual beauty, learning and wisdom. Possessing brilliant talents, she studied all the then Greco-Roman literature and all the branches which then dominated the rhetorical and philosophical sciences. Even, "having become learned in medical treatises", she was well versed in the books of the physicians". Converted to the Christ by a certain desert-dweller, she was granted a wonderful vision in which Jesus Christ Himself named her as His bride and as a sign of His betrothing presented her a precious ring.

Having completely devoted herself to the holy faith and to her Bridegroom, St. Catherine during the persecution of Maxentius, "aflame with the goodness of virginity", appeared before the emperor, exposed the errors of the pagans and confessed Christ before him. Charmed with the beauty of St. Catherine, the emperor tried to convince her to worship the pagan deities. When his personal conversations with her had no success then he ordered that 50 philosophers and orators gather for conversations with St. Catherine. Having appeared at the meeting, she seemed more powerful than all those philosophers in scientific knowledge, on the height and validity of ideas, in the power of the word and, "with a mighty mind" having shamed their "courageous advocates" "of falsely named knowledge" and "having accused the vanity of earthly wisdom" by her preaching about Christ "to rescue unto salvation many from the frenzy of idols". Seeing the unsuccessfulness of his attempts, the emperor nevertheless would try all the more to involve St. Catherine in his impurity. He began to seduce her with various caresses and slyness, suggesting to divide the empire with her and to give her half of his authority. The chaste virgin refused these offers, saying that "more than any imperial porphyry she wishes the clothes of martyrdom". Then the emperor, filled with anger, ordered her to be stripped naked and beaten with ox-hide straps. They beat the holy martyress for two hours while her virgin body was not torn with wounds. St. Catherine, to surprise of spectators, endured these cruel tortures with unusual courage and patience. The fierce torturer ordered her imprisoned and without food or

drink. But Jesus Christ did not abandon His bride without care and every day sent a dove with food to her in prison, and then He Himself visited her, and inspired into her full courage and a fortress of patience. After two days being led before the judgment seat to the king, St. Catherine was completely sound and strengthened by the previous scourging, with bright joy on her face and with her former beauty. The persuasive effort of the emperor to get her to worship the pagan gods again had no success and he ordered to turn St. Catherine over to the wheel of torture. But she remained unshakable after these most cruel tortures. Finally, the holy sufferer, by command of the torturer, was "beheaded by the sword". Seeing the suffering of St. Catherine, the Empress Augusta (or Basilissa), the wife of Maxentius, Porphyrius the Stratelates (commander) and 200 warriors converted to Christ. All of them were decapitated. Now the relics of St. Catherine are found in the monastery on Mount Sinai.

Troparion, tone 4

**O Blessed Catherine,
With virtue like solar rays
You enlightened unbelieving wise men.
And as the brightest moon going in the night
You drove away the darkness of unbelief.
And you have given faith to the empress,
And accused the group of torturers,
And were called a bride by God.
With desire you flowed into the heavenly bridal chamber
To the most beautiful Bridegroom,
And were crowned by Him with the royal crown.
Standing before Him with the angels,
Pray for us who make your All-honorable memory.**

Kontakion, tone 2

**Now let us who love the divine martyrs
Raise up an honorable choir,
Honoring the all-wise Catherine.
For this she preached Christ in the arena,
And trampled down the serpents,
Despising the wisdom of the orators.**

Epistle and Gospel: see Feb. 4.

Holy Great Martyr Mercurius

He suffered for Christ during the reign of Emperors Decius and Valerian in Caesarea, Cappadocia. "The armor of faith" and "strengthened by the power of Christ", he underwent "every kind of visible illness, gladly", and, after the most horrible tortures, was beheaded by the sword. The head of the holy great martyr and most of his relics are now in Mainz.

Kontakion, tone 4

**A warrior invincible in battle,
And an intercessor unashamed in troubles,
Let us gloriously bless Mercurius with hymns.
For gladly celebrating his memory,
He delivers us from troubles and sorrows.**

† Martyr Mercurius of Smolensk

According to ancient monuments, he was "born a Roman into a glorious family". In youth he arrived in Russia and served as a warrior for the Smolensk prince. Physically strong, St. Mercurius was also strong in faith. "With a good life and by purity pleasing to Christ God", he led an ascetic life, was a strict faster and protected his virginity. On command from above, St. Mercurius went to the camp of Batu and the Tartars who surrounded the city of Smolensk in 1238, (near the village of Dolgomost (Long bridge)) entered "into the middle of the nasty forces", standing up "for the Temple of the Theotokos and for orthodoxy", and as "an invincible Christian warrior and a valiant victor over enemies", with the help of God "and the assistance of the Theotokos", he defeated the Tartar Great Khan in a single battle. The courageous holy warrior was killed by the Tartars and before his own death he fervently prayed to the Lord for the salvation of the city. The Tartars, fleeing in horror by the death of the Great Khan, hastily left the Smolensk neighborhood. The grateful inhabitants of Smolensk reverently buried the body of St. Mercurius in the cathedral. Now the relics of St. Mercurius repose in the Smolensk Abraham Monastery.

Kontakion, tone 4

You appeared an invincible warrior in battle,

**Born in a Roman family to be a son for the city of Smolensk.
For you were called for their sake,
For the Theotokos sent a mighty guard to the city.
Let us, who celebrate his memory in gladness,
Bless Mercurius in hymns
That the warrior may save our city from trouble.**

His synaxis is done in his temple.

Martyr Augusta, Empress. See above for the Holy Great Martyr Catherine.

Ven. Mastridia, the Virgin

She was born in Alexandria. A certain youth, enamored with her beauty, was tempted in particular by her eyes. St. Mastridia pricked them out by herself with a weaver's shuttle and thus delivered herself from sin and the young man from temptation.

Ven. Gregory, founder of the monastery in Chrysopetra in Pontus. His relics are in his monastery.

Martyr Alexander suffered for Christ in Corinth during the reign of Julian the Apostate.

Repose of Ven. Simon of Soigi

Born in Solvychegodsk, he at first practiced asceticism as a monk in the Monastery of the Ven. Cornelius of Komel. Then he left for the mouth of the Soigi River entering the Vychehda River, and there founded a monastery in 1541. He died in 1562. His relics repose in his monastery abolished in 1791 and is now the Soigi-Transfiguration Cemetery, Solvychegodsk district, Riabovskoi Township.

*S. V. Bulgakov, Handbook for Church Servers, 2nd ed. 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 0428-0430
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