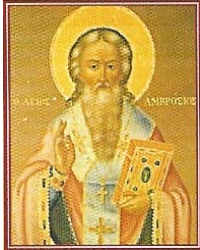


December 7

B. Our Father among the Saints Ambrose, Bishop of Mediolanum (Milan)



The son of the Roman prefect of Gaul (born in 333 or about 340), he received a brilliant secular education in Rome. Gifted with brilliant talents and possessing an unusual gift of eloquence, he chose for himself a career as a lawyer. He entered into civil service and soon achieved the rank of prefect (deputy) of Liguria. Having arrived in Mediolanum on the occasion of the election of bishop, St. Ambrose was himself elected (in the year 374) bishop of Mediolanum, by special indication from above. During the time of the procession into the temple for the election of the new archpastor, heated arguments arose between the Orthodox and the Arians. Ambrose, as the prefect, with all the power of his eloquence convinced the people to come to order. A child's voice suddenly gave out: "Ambrose is bishop"! And both the Orthodox and the Arians, all being in the church, unanimously proclaimed: "Ambrose is bishop"! Ambrose, understanding himself unworthy of this dignity, used all means to evade this election, but was forced to undertake the hierarchical service. Not being baptized at that time but only prepared for baptism, he, after the statement of his election by the emperor, was baptized by the Orthodox bishop. In seven days he passed through the church degrees, and on the eighth, December 7, 374, he was consecrated the Archbishop of Mediolanum (Milan). Having taken his cathedra, he distributed gold and silver to the poor, and dedicated his real estate to the Church and all was given over to the performance of his high duties. He performed the divine services daily and all the time remaining from the management of the church, he devoted day and night to studying the Holy Scriptures and the works of the Greek fathers and writers. Having made the Holy Scriptures and the truths of the faith his own in mind and heart, St. Ambrose began with great fervor to preach to the people, not leaving one Sunday or one feast without teaching and in every instance taking that opportunity, and sometimes more than once a day he ascended the cathedra. His word was comprehensible and pleasant, his voice was quiet, and consequently in the temple, a surprising quietness reigned during his sermon. Also he was especially zealous in preparing the catechumens in the truths of the faith and their preparation for holy baptism. He applied great care to the improvement of the church clergy and set himself as an example of how to connect a strict ascetic life to the duties of a servant of the

church. The holy bishop "was a man of great abstinence, long vigils and works. Daily he mortified his flesh with fasting which he interrupted only on Saturdays and Sundays and on the feasts of the most famous martyrs. He offered prayers day and night and did not avoid the labor of writing books in his own hand if he were not kept from this by bodily illness". Being strict with himself, he was good, gracious and accessible to all. "He rejoiced with the rejoicing and cried with the crying. If anyone fell he confessed his sins to him. He so cried, that he raised you to tears". With varying affability and compassion, he helped the poor and consoled the unfortunate. As a zealous advocate of Orthodoxy, he led a continuous struggle against heretics and his special merit consists in the eradication of the Arian heresy in Italy. Dying paganism tried to return life to itself, but St. Ambrose subverted all its plans and its adherents. Political upheavals, civil wars and abuse of authority forced him to necessarily accept his important participation in the affairs of state, and in these cases he displayed surprising magnanimity, common sense and firmness. He died on April 4, 397. His relics are in Mediolanum. St. Ambrose wrote many dogmatic and moral compositions. As a witness to his hierarchical care of the clergy is his treatise "De officiis ministrum" (Concerning the Duties of the Clergy) where he gives them advice, and manuals of a mainly practical character supported with examples from the lives of the Old and New Testament righteous ones. Among the many of his hymns is the especially well known church hymn: "Let us praise Thee as God", composed on the occasion of the victory of Orthodoxy over Arianism.

Kontakion, tone 3

**Shining with divine teachings, you darkened the delusion of Arius,
O Sacred Mystic and Shepherd Ambrose.
Working wonders by the power of the Spirit, you openly healed diverse passions,
O Venerable Father:
Pray to Christ our God to save our souls.**

Epistle and Gospel: The general to a Venerable Saint.

† Repose of Our Venerable Father Anthony of Siya, the new Wonderworker.

In the world Andrew, the son of a peasant from the Kecht settlement, Dvina Volost, distinguished with beautiful and rich intellectual talents, he soon learned his letters. His favorite hobby was the writing of icons. Within a year after entering into marriage and having lost his wife, he accepted monasticism in the monastery of St. Pachomius on the Keno River. Here he became an example of monastic

humility and obedience. He was the first in the temple for prayer, kept strict abstinence and incessantly kept in his heart the memory of death and the last judgment. Being elevated to Hieromonk and never omitting performing divine services, he tirelessly also fulfilled all of his monastic labor. Within a few years, loving solitude, he left for the north and at the Siya River founded a monastery, (see Archangel Diocese) in which he was the hegumen. "Having adorned his life with much abstinence" and "having labored well" the Venerable Anthony died in peace in 1556, bequeathed the brothers of the hermitage to live in the world, in abstinence, in labor and to help the poor and the needy. His relics are in a hidden place in his monastery.

Troparion, tone 1

**Having burnt with spiritual desire,
Having rejected the mutinies of the world,
You have adhered lovingly to the one God.
And seeking Him with all your soul,
You went into the internal wilderness.
Having settled before the waters,
That in tears and labor existed for many years,
You led an angelic life with much patience,
In the schooling of divine reason:
And you wisely gathered many monks, who visiting, but did not stay,
O our Venerable Father Anthony,
Praying to the All Holy Trinity,
To deliver us from all kinds of evil, and to save our souls.**

Kontakion, tone 8

**O Venerable One, from youth you have thinned your flesh in fasting and prayers,
And you have followed Christ carrying your cross.
Therefore you joyfully accomplished the flow to the highest,
Standing with all the Saints before the Holy Trinity.
And now visiting your flock, remember those who honor your most holy memory,
That all may thankfully hymn you:
Rejoice, O Godly-wise Anthony, the leader of the desert dwellers.**

Paramoegas and Matins Gospel: See Jan. 10. **Epistle:** See Nov. 4. **Gospel:** See Dec. 3.

His Synaxis is served in his monastery and temple.

Repose of our Venerable Father Nilus, of Stolben Island, Lake Seliger, the new Wonderworker

Born in the Zhaben churchyard (Valdai district), he since early years was distinguished by his meekness, asceticism and led all his life, "day and night, being taught the Law of the Lord". Having accepted monasticism in the Kripetsky Hermitage, he spent 10 years here in asceticism in common. Then having left for the wilderness, he spent 12 years in a hut on the shore of the Cheremhi River (the Rzhev district), eating grass and spending his time in prayer and meditation on God. When many laymen began coming to the holy ascetic, seeking advice, comfort and prayers from him, then he, fleeing from glory, left for Stolben Island, Seliger Lake, and for those he began the Nilo-Stolben Hermitage which subsequently arose here. At first living again in a cave, then in a hut, together with them built a chapel, the Venerable Nilus himself tilled the soil, planted vegetables and ate them. The holy ascetic lived here in complete solitude, and only fishermen and foresters were his rare visitors. He never let himself rest and was continually in labor and prayer. He did not even lie down to sleep, but when he felt extreme exhaustion; he leaned his hands on two crutches and then fell asleep. Having lived to a ripe old age, the Venerable Nilus dug out his grave inside the chapel and every day came to cry over it waiting the hour of his death. Being a foreseer, many times he accused those coming to him of hidden sins and he led them to correction. On the Stolben Island the Venerable Nilus spent 26 years in ascetic silence and, while living was glorified with the gift of wonderworking, and died in peace in 1554. Subsequently the Temple of the Epiphany was built over his grave. The relics of the Venerable Nilus, glorified by many miracles, were found incorruptible in 1667 and now openly repose in his hermitage (see Tver Diocese).

Troparion, tone 4

**You were revealed a shining candlestick on the island of Seliger Lake,
O venerable Father Nilus:
For you carried the cross of Christ on your shoulders from your youth,
You fervently followed Him,
With purity you drew near to God,
Therefore you were enriched with the talent of wonders:
Therefore we also flow to the shrine of your relics, prayerfully saying:
O Venerable Father, pray to Christ God to save our souls.**

Kontakion, tone 8

**O Venerable One you withdrew from your country,
And settled in a hermitage,
And went to an island of Lake Seliger,
You have demonstrated a severe way of life,
And surprised many with good deeds,
You have received the talent of miracles from Christ:
Remember us, who honor your memory,
That we may call out to you: rejoice, our Father Nilus.**

Matins Gospel and so forth see May 27.

Ven. Paul the Obedient (i.e. the postulant)

He spent most of his life traveling: he was in Jerusalem, Cyprus and Byzantium. He died in the latter place. He is glorified for miracles during his life.

Ven. John the Faster in the St. Sabbas Laura, see Mar 30 and Dec. 3.

Ven. John the Faster of the Kievan Caves. His relics are in the St. Anthony caves in Kiev.

Martyr Athenodorus, a monk from Syrian Mesopotamia, suffered for Christ during the reign of Diocletian in about the year 304.

Ven. Gregory the Silent

Born in Serbia, he practiced asceticism as a monk on Athos. Here at the beginning of XV century he built a hermitage and is called the Gregoriou in honor of him.

The Seliger-Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God

This icon was brought by Ven. Nilus of Stolben (see above) to the place of his asceticism on the Seliger Island (Tver Diocese) and now is found by his relics.

*S. V. Bulgakov, Handbook for Church Servers, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp 0447-9
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