

December 26

D. + Synaxis of the All-holy Theotokos



On the second day of the Nativity of Christ the Holy Church invites its faithful children for the thanksgiving glorification of the All-holy Virgin, who has contributed to the great mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God. Because of this the day is called the "Synaxis of the All-holy Theotokos"¹

Kontakion, tone 6

**He who was begotten before the morning star
Of the father without a mother,
Today is incarnate of you without a father.
Therefore the star announces the glad tidings to the magi,
Angels and shepherds sing of your inexpressible birth-giving,
O Lady full of grace.**

Epistle: see Mar. 25. **Gospel:** Mt. 2:13-23; sel. 4.

Holy Hieromartyr Euthymius, Bishop of Sardis

Before he was a monk he was glorified by a strict life and zealousness for honoring holy icons. As the Bishop of Sardis he participated in the Seventh Ecumenical Council where he defended the holy icon with zealousness. For his Orthodox conviction St. Euthymius was honed three times and, finally, during the reign of Emperor Theophilus (840) was whipped to death with ox-hide straps. His relics, glorified by many wonders, repose in the city of Anchialus on the Black Sea.

The service of St. Euthymius is sung on his day.

Ven. Evarestus was a famous faster and ascetic of the Studite Monastery in Constantinople. Carrying iron chains on his body, he only received food once on Sunday. He died in the 9th century and was buried in the Kokkorovi Monastery founded by him.

Ven. Constantine of Synada

Born a Jew, he practiced asceticism as a monk in Asia Minor and Constantinople in the 8th century. Before his baptism, kissing the cross, he touched it to his head, and on it was imprinted the sign of the Cross, which protected him up to his death. For marvelous asceticism he was rewarded with the gift of insight and wonders.

Hieromartyr Constance

Born a Great Russian, he served as a Hieromonk at the Russian representation church in Constantinople. He took special care in adorning the temple, which he donated from his estate. He was distinguished by special zealotness for the divine services, he served a liturgy almost every day and twice a week he gave talks in Russian and Greek. His devotion and accuracy in the fulfillment of the duties assigned to him involved people, and he loved and respected them all. Consequently after some unpleasantness which arose between him and the ambassador, the angry Constance went to the Sultan and there he accepted Islam. Soon he deeply repented this and, again being in the palace, loudly denounced Mohammed and confessed Christ. These furious Turkish fanatics killed him in the palace square in 1743.

Barlov or Blessed Womb Icon of the All-holy Theotokos

This icon appeared in 1392 and is in the Cathedral of the Annunciation in Moscow. On this icon the Savior is depicted sitting on the left hand of the Mother of God.

Icon of the Mother of God: Blessed is the womb that carried Thee, and the breasts which Thou has sucked.

The depiction of the Mother of God on this icon is clear, two angels on the right are holding a crown over her head, and those on the left hand are holding a chain of ornaments, descending lower is the face of the Mother of God. On the right hand of the Mother of God lies the Savior, who leans to her left hand. At the bottom edge of the icon are two round images of unknown saints (one is similar to John the Forerunner, and the other is in hierarchical vestments).

Kykkos Icon of the Mother of God

According to tradition, this wonderworking icon also called the "Merciful" was written by Evangelist Luke for the Egyptian ascetics. From there, during the sovereignty of the Saracens, she was transferred to Constantinople and finally to the island of Cyprus where now it is in the Kykkos Monastery. There were innumerable wonders from this icon. Not only Christians but also Mohammedans respected her.

Icon of the Mother of God, the Three Joys

She is found in the Holy Trinity Church, on the Griaz (Mud), in Moscow. Together with the baby Jesus the baby John the Baptist is depicted on it.

Vilna Ostro Bram Icon of the All-holy Theotokos

This icon is in Vilna on the city gate, called Ostro Bram. Both Orthodox and Roman Catholics honor her with awesomeness.

¹ In some places of Great Russia the feast of Salome or Solomonida is served on this day as if they were the sponsors of the Divine Child at His birth. This is mentioned in some of the apocryphal Gospels. Among the Old Believers she is remembered when they pray for a woman giving birth. In honor of the imagined grandmother - the sponsors of the Savior - to the north of Russia on December 26 grandmother mid-wives cook porridge (kasha) called "baba's kasha". To the south of Rus on this day village women, though it was forbidden by the Metropolitan of Kiev Michael in 1590, carried pies into church, thinking to honor the Theotokos by it, as this in general is accepted practice in relation to women giving birth.

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 0479-0480
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