

# December 27

## *C. † Holy Apostle Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen*



He belonged to the group of seven deacons installed by the apostles to serve meals for the widows (Acts 6) and was called archdeacon because he was the eldest of them. Filled with the Holy Spirit and power, he preached the word of God, confirming it with signs and wonders. During his last sermon about Christ in the Sanhedrin, those sitting there saw his face, "as the face of an Angel". Upon finishing his sermon, St. Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, "gazed into heaven and saw the glory to God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55). He underwent the hatred of the Jews for this sermon, who slandered him for blasphemy of God and Moses and they stoned him (about the year 34). Before his death St. Stephen, "knelt down", prayed for his murderers, and cried "with a loud voice: 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them'. And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (Acts 7:60). St. Stephen was the first of the Christians who suffered for their faith, according to St. Asterius, being "the first of the martyrs, teacher of suffering for Christ, the foundation of good confession, because before Stephen nobody poured out blood for the Gospel", is why he is called Protomartyr. The body of Holy Protomartyr Stephen was honorably buried on the grounds of the Jewish teacher Gamaliel near Jerusalem. Refer to Aug. 2 and Sep. 15. The right hand of the Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen is kept in a special ark (kivot) in the Serapion vault near the church of the Ven. Nikon in the Trinity - St. Sergius Laura.

### *Troparion, tone 4*

**You have practiced asceticism well ascetically,  
O Protomartyr and Apostle of Christ,  
And you denounced the impiety of the torturers,  
For you were stoned by the hands of the lawless.  
You have received the crown from the right hand from on high,  
And you exclaimed to God crying aloud:  
O Lord, lay not this sin on them.**

### *Kontakion, tone 3*

**Yesterday the Master came to us in the flesh,  
And today His servant departs from the flesh.  
Yesterday He who reigns over flesh was born;  
Today His servant is stoned to death.  
The Divine Protomartyr Stephen dies for His sake.**

**Epistle and Gospel:** See Aug. 2.

*Our Ven. Father and Confessor Theodore the Branded and his Brother  
Theophanes the Craftsman*

Ven. Theodore practiced asceticism as a monk in the Palestinian Monastery of St. Sabbas. During the reign of Emperor Leo the Armenian he arrived in Constantinople to defend Orthodoxy against the iconoclasts, and for his zealotry for iconolatry he suffered wounds and imprisonment. During the reign of Emperor Theophilus, St. Theodore again underwent torture for the holy icons. By order of Theophilus, he and his brother St. Theophanes (Oct. 11) were branded on their foreheads with a heated iron with the inscription of the accusation of their iconolatry. And the saintly brothers were banished to imprisonment in Apamea, Syria, where St. Theodore died (about the year 840). His relics subsequently were transferred to Chalcedon.

*Ven. Theodore, Archbishop of Constantinople*

Born in Constantinople, he was a presbyter and sacristan in the Great Church up to the time of his patriarchate. In 676 he was appointed patriarch, but was deposed in 678. Upon the death of Patriarch George, St. Theodore was once again installed as patriarch and died in 686.

*Ven. Luke of Triglia*

He practiced asceticism as a monk in a certain monastery near Constantinople. Triglia is now a village on the Gulf of Chios.

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 0483-4  
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