

MARCH 10 - THE HOLY MARTYR CODRATUS OF CORINTH, AND OTHERS

In a time of persecution of Christians, many of the faithful fled to the mountains and caves. The mother of this Codratus did so. She was pregnant just at that time, and gave birth to Codratus in a forest, dying almost at once. He was kept safe and fed by the providence of God and his guardian angel. Codratus grew up in solitude with nature. He who gave manna from heaven to the Israelites in the wilderness released a sweet dew from a cloud onto the mouth of the child Codratus. When he was twelve years old, he went down to the town, and there some good people took a fancy to him and educated him. He studied medicine and then began to heal the sick, using both natural medicines and, more importantly, the spiritual power and prayer which had been with him from childhood. When a new persecution arose under Decius, Codratus was taken for trial and thrown into prison. Five of his friends stood beside him and confessed the name of Christ. They were: Cyprian, Dionysius, Anectus, Paul and Crescens. They were all dragged through the streets and struck with sticks and stones by the



unbelievers, especially by the children, until they arrived at the scaffold. Here the martyrs prayed to God and were beheaded with the sword. A spring of water gushed out onto the earth at the spot, which to this day is called by Codratus's name and commemorates the heroic death for Christ of the holy six. They suffered with honor for the truth in Corinth in the year 250, in the time of the Emperor Decius and his governor Jason.

THE HOLY MARTYR CODRATUS OF NICOMEDIA

He was a rich nobleman and also a convinced and baptized Christian. In a time of persecution, when Valerian shut up many Christians in jail, Codratus bribed the warder and went into the prison to bring the captives food and uphold them in their faith. When they were brought before the judge and questioned about their names, place of origin and status, they were silent. Then Codratus appeared behind them and shouted at the top of his voice: 'By name, we are Christians; servants of Jesus Christ the Lord by office and birth, and our city and place of origin is heaven.' After this declaration he was brought to trial, and after long and harsh torture was beheaded along with the others.

From *The Prologue from Ochrid*. Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic. Lazarica Press. Birmingham, B30 1QE England

Go Forth

VOLUME 24 NUMBER 10

MARCH 9, 2014

SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

At the end of the first century — when the Church was still a very small group, a very small minority, in a society which was definitely anti-Christian when the persecution was beginning — St. John the Divine, the beloved disciple of Christ, wrote these words: "And this is the victory, our faith, this is the victory." There was no victory at that time, and yet he knew that in his faith he had the victory that can be applied to us today. We have the promise of Christ, that the gates of hell will never prevail against the Church. We have the promise of Christ that if we have faith, all things are possible. We have the promise of the Holy Spirit, that He will fill all that which is weak, that He will help us at the moment when we need help. In other words, we have all the possibilities, we have everything that we need, and therefore the victory is ours. It is not a human victory which can be defined in terms of money, of human success, of human achievements. What we



are preaching tonight, what we are proclaiming tonight, what we are praying for tonight, is the victory of Christ in me, in us, in all of you in the Orthodox Church in America. And that victory of Christ in us, of the one who for us was crucified and rose again from the dead, that victory will be the victory

of His Church.

Today is the triumph of Orthodoxy, and a hymn sung today states solemnly and simply: "This is the Apostolic faith, this is the Orthodox faith, this is the faith of the Fathers, this is the faith that is the foundation of the world." My dear brothers and sisters, this is also our own faith. We are chosen. We are elected. We are the happy few that can say of our faith, "apostolic," "universal," "the faith of our fathers," "Orthodoxy," "the truth." Having this wonderful treasure, let us preserve it, let us keep it, and let us also use it in such a way that this treasure becomes the victory of Christ in us and in His Church. Amen.

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Go Forth...and teach all nations. (Matthew 28:19)

MARCH 12 - SAINT SYMEON THE NEW THEOLOGIAN

Symeon was born with the given name of George in 957, the son of Basil and Eugenia who were devout Christians and of high social standing in the city of Galatine, Paphlagonia. After completing his elementary studies, he was sent at the age of fourteen to Constantinople in the care of an uncle of considerable influence in the capital city. Despite a high intellect which had been amply demonstrated, he was disinterested in the study program offered, and to relieve the boredom he sought a change by paying a visit to the famous Monastery of Studios in Constantinople. It proved to be a visit that was to alter the course of his life, much to the benefit of Christendom.

At the Studios Monastery, George spent many hours in conversation with a remarkable and quite pious monk who had earned the name of Symeon the Devout, who so inspired the young student that he asked permission to remain as a novice. Because

of his youth and relative lack of study, the request was denied, and George returned to his uncle with a determination to be the brightest scholar of his day. Returning after some years of intense study, he was again denied admission to Studios because his learning had been misdirected, and he was advised to apply himself to the study of the fathers and Scriptures. The resolute George took this course of religious preparation, and at long last he was admitted to the monastery in 984 when he was twenty-seven years old.

No man has ever entered a cloister better prepared for the service of the Savior than the eager George, but again he was denied permission to be at the side of the elder monk Symeon because it was in violation of monastic rules to allow such privilege to a novice, and he was, therefore, sent to the monastery of St. Mamas where he was finally ordained a priest at the age of thirty by Patriarch Nicholas Chrysoberges. At his ordination he assumed the name of



his spiritual father, Symeon, with whom he remained close until the latter's death.

Appointed by the patriarch to be abbot of the Monastery of St. Mamas, the younger Symeon brought about sweeping reforms within the monastery which called for a strict adherence to the rules concerning self-denial and fasting, reforms which brought protest from the monks. An appeal to the patriarch availed the monks little because he knew Symeon's sterling character and supported him in his disciplinary action. A former metropolitan of Nikomedia named Stephanos, now chancellor at the Patriarchate, sided with the insurgent monks and for rea-

sons best known to himself sought to discredit Symeon with a series of harassments that after six years finally influenced the patriarch to the point where Symeon was exiled and sent out to fend for himself.

After some wandering, Symeon came upon a private chapel owned by one Christopher Faguras, a man of deep religious faith, who welcomed the pariah and allowed him to establish a monastery of his own. It was at his private chapel that Symeon composed sacred hymns of great beauty as well as masterful writings which encompassed all phases of theology, including catechisms. His prolific writing was of such caliber that it was recognized throughout Christendom and acknowledged by the patriarch to be the works of a man divinely inspired.

Vindicated at last, Symeon was asked to return to Constantinople, but he preferred to remain at the chapel to continue his literary efforts which form an integral part of church reading. He died on 12 March 1022.

From *Orthodox Saints*. Volume 1.
George Poulos. Holy Cross Orthodox
Press. Brookline, MA.