

MARCH 3 - THE HOLY MARTYRS EUTROPIUS, CLEONICUS AND BASILISCUS

They were comrades of St. Theodore the Tyro. When glorious Theodore gloriously laid down his life, they remained behind in prison, and were not condemned for a long time because of the courage of the imperial governor of the town of Amasea. When a new governor arrived, more inhuman than his predecessor, he ordered these three to be brought before him. All three were young men; Eutropius and Cleonicus were brothers and Basiliscus a kinsman of Theodore's. But all three were, through their brotherly love, as blood-brothers. And they therefore said to the governor: 'As the Holy Trinity is indivisible, so are we indivisible in faith and inseparable in love.' All flattery on the governor's



part was in vain, as were all his efforts to bribe Eutropius. He first invited him to dine with him, which Eutropius refused with a quotation from the Psalms: 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsels

of the ungodly', after which he offered him vast wealth — 150 litres of silver — which Eutropius likewise refused, reminding the governor that Judas lost his soul for silver. After all these attempts, followed by interrogation and torture, the first two were condemned to be crucified, for which they gave thanks to Christ

that He had counted them worthy to die the death He had died; and the third, Basiliscus, was beheaded. They all entered into the Kingdom of joy, where their commander, Theodore, was waiting for them, glorified before Christ the Lord and Victor. They suffered with honour in 308.

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

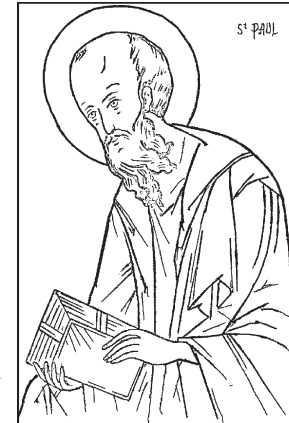
Go Forth

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THE VALUE OF FASTING

The value of fasting consists not in abstinence from food, but in a relinquishment of sinful practices; since he who limits his fasting only to an abstinence from meats, is he who especially disparages it. Do you fast? Give me proof of it by your works.



It is said, 'By what works?' If you see an enemy, be reconciled to him! If you see a friend enjoying honor, envy him not!... For let not the mouth only fast, but also the eye, and the ear, and the feet, and the hands, and all the members of our bodies. Let the hands fast, by being pure from rapine and avarice. Let the feet fast, by ceasing from running to the forbidden spectacles. Let the eyes fast, by being taught never to fix themselves rudely upon handsome countenances. For looking is the food of the eyes; but if this be such as is unlawful or forbidden, it mars the fast, and overturns the whole safety of the soul: but if it be law-

ful and safe, it adorns fasting. For it would be an instance of the highest absurdity to abstain from meats and from lawful food because of the fast, but with the eyes to feed even on what is forbidden. Do you not eat flesh? Feed not upon licentiousness by means of the

eyes. Let the ears fast also. The fasting of the ear is not to receive evil — speaking and calumnies. 'You shall not receive an idle report,' it says. Let the mouth, too, fast from foul words and railing. For what does it profit if we abstain from birds and fishes, and yet bite and devour our brethren? The evil speaker eats meat by devouring his brother, and bites the flesh of his neighbor. Because of this Paul utters the fearful saying, "If you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another."

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

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

MARCH 5 — SAINT MARK THE ATHENIAN

When St. Paul spoke from Mars Hill, he opened his remarks not with a polite “Gentlemen” or “My Friends,” but commenced with the words spoken in respect as well as greeting: “Ye men of Athens.” When this magnificent saint spoke, he was addressing polytheists, but as he faced the Acropolis, which was already 500 years old, at that time, he already knew that Athens was the cradle of democracy and would be receptive to the humble carpenter in whose eyes all men were equal. That Mark should come down to us as St. Mark the Athenian is not just to distinguish him from other Marks, but to have us know he was one of the “men of Athens” four centuries after St. Paul.

Mark was born in Athens into a family of intellectuals to whom he was indebted for his intelligence but whose highly successful commercial enterprises he valued little, preferring to devote himself not to the business of making money but to the deadly serious and much more rewarding business of pursuing a career in religion. He could thank his family for the very best education that money could buy but thereafter the achievements were strictly his own. He also owed a debt of gratitude to a lov-

ing family who never interfered in his choice of career and never discouraged him in any way to depart from the merchant tradition which had amassed a family fortune in which he was assured his share.

Mark dismissed the money matters from his mind and concentrated on his preparation for service to Jesus Christ, attaining a scholastic stature that drew the attention of no less a person than the eminent St. John Chrysostom who took a personal interest in him and closely followed his remarkable mastery of every phase of ecclesiastical lore. Mark is said to have committed to memory the entire Bible from which he could quote passages at any length from the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. This was not an ostentatious display of his cerebral prowess but the full use of a tremendous intellect dedicated to the word of God, aiming at spiritual perfection with all the mental processes he could muster, leaving no stone unturned that lie in the path of the approach to Heaven.

After receiving the utmost in religious tutoring from St. John Chrysostom, Mark sailed to Africa and traveled deep into the interior of what is now Ethiopia, settling at last atop a mountain

to enter a life of asceticism far removed from the clamor of the city. Assured a quiet solitude, he commenced a life of meditation, prayer and fasting, interspersed with religious writings. He had left word with his family that, should he not return, his share of the wealth be given to various charities. He was to remain long after the family wealth had been divided after the death of his parents because he remained in his bleak retreat for an incredible sixty years.

It is said that the prolonged spiritual vigil of Mark resulted not only in his awareness of the Holy Spirit about him, blotting out the mundane completely, but he came to actually witness a physical manifestation of the Spirit. On the occasions following a fast, he is said to have received Holy Communion from a heaven sent hand which he looked upon with his own eyes and was sanctified in life as saints are after death. The miraculous appearance of the hand, which placed the sacred spoon to his mouth, was perfectly formed and when he looked for the rest of this angel, the arm was only visible to the elbow.

Some distance from his mountain retreat was another holy man of the desert of Egypt who is known as St. Serapion and who in a vision was instructed to go to St. Mark’s mountain where

he would be told by Mark himself the nature of his visit. Serapion made the arduous journey not without a great deal of pain and discomfort, arriving finally at the mountain peak exhausted.

After he had rested, Serapion was told by Mark that

he had been sent to see Mark’s funeral and interment. By now 120 years old, the venerable Mark had been told by his unseen visitor that his time was at hand and since there was no other living soul to attend him, Serapion would be sent to bury him. Soon afterwards, Mark died at the age of 121 and was given a Christian burial by Serapion who, like everyone else who knew about St. Mark the Athenian, never ceased to be amazed by the wondrous life of a man of the city of Athens who left family and friends to find the kinship of the Holy Spirit.

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George Poulos. Holy Cross Orthodox Press. Brookline, MA.

