November 14

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Gregory Palamas (1296-1359) monk and pastor

In 1359 Gregory Palamas, one of the best loved monks and pastors in the Byzantine world, died in his episcopal see of Thessalonica.
Gregory came from a family of Constantinople, and was involved in the hesychast renewal movement that had made Mt. Athos a beacon of light in an era darkened by the swift decline of the Byzantine empire.
He was an accomplished scholar who had studied in the best schools of the capital, and in his monastic experience both his deep inner life, based on the practice of the Jesus Prayer, and his verve as a polemicist were evident. When his contemporary Barlaam the Calabrian made an accusation of heresy against those monks who founded their spiritual life on the repetition of the Lord's Name, Gregory leapt to the defense of the "holy hesychasts," creating a theology that was both faithful to patristic tradition and profoundly original.
The basic distinction Gregory made between God's essence and his energies had the virtue of explaining both God's radical otherness from human beings, and his free gift of himself to those who seek an authentic spiritual experience in prayer.
Because of his involvement in the controversies of his day, Gregory was excommunicated and imprisoned by the Patriarch of Constantinople, John Caleca. Under Caleca's successor Isidore, however, Gregory was readmitted to the communion of the Church and even became archbishop of Thessalonica.
Palamas, who sung of God as a "fire of consuming love," gave to later generations one of the highest and most complete doctrines on humanity's divinization, which the Eastern tradition sees as the true fulfillment of God's plan of salvation.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Heb 13:7-16; Mt 5:14-19

Andrew Septychky

(1865-1944)

pastor

From the Union of Brest in 1596 to the twentieth century, the Byzantine Catholic churches of Galicia and western Ukraine had a difficult history, due to the changing of ruling powers in their territories. In the 1900s the Greek Catholic Church of Ukraine suffered unprecedented persecution, especially after its abolishment by a pseudo-synod convoked by Stalin in 1946 with the cooperation of part of the Orthodox hierarchy. From that moment on, Ukrainian Greek Catholics saw an exponential increase in the number of martyrs and confessors from among their ranks.
If we wish to remember a powerful example of Christian witness from this era, the name that spontaneously comes to the mind of every Ukrainian Catholic is that of Andrew Septychky, who was metropolitan of Lviv and Halyc from 1900 to 1944.
A native of Galicia, Septychky was a prayerful and learned pastor who spent much of his time supervising orphanages, hospitals, and educational institutions. As one ruler wrestled power from another in his country (this happened no less than six times during his episcopate), he became a true father to his people.
When persecution began, first under the Soviets and then during the Nazi occupation, Septychky publicly defended the weak, especially Jews, to whom he dedicated a famous pastoral letter. The division of the Christian churches caused him great suffering, and he became a forerunner of the ecumenical movement, making many treasures of the Eastern churches better known in the West. Septychky himself was the son of fervent Roman Catholic parents, but had reconnected with his roots at a young age by joining the Byzantine Catholic church.
In 1939, a premonition of approaching martyrdom led him to write to Pope Pius XII and ask for his blessing. Although Septychky was not martyred, he is certainly worthy of being commemorated as a confessor of Christian faith and hope.

Joseph Louis Bernardin

(1928-1996)

pastor

The Catholic archbishop of Chicago, Joseph Louis Bernardin, died during the night of November 13, 1996 after a long struggle against illness.
Born in 1928 in South Carolina into a family of Italian immigrants, Joseph was ordained a priest in 1952. Elected auxiliary bishop of Atlanta at the age of 38, he became one of the most outspoken American bishops, guiding the American Catholic church through its difficult post-Vatican II transition. In the midst of disputes among the different components of the North American church, Bernardin worked tirelessly to build communion.

Named archbishop of Cincinnati, and later of Chicago, Bernardin led the United States Bishops' Conference, taking clear stands in favor of peace and sharply criticizing his country's military policies.
At the same time, he began to reflect on the need to turn the Church's attention to Christ. This reflection accompanied him constantly during the last years of his spiritual journey, informing his entire ministry as a servant of God's Word.
After successfully defending himself against the false allegations of sexual abuse filed against him by a psychologically disturbed man, without resorting to exemptions or privileges, Berdardin was diagnosed with an incurable illness in 1995.
The last two years of his life were a ceaseless pilgrimage among those who suffered in his diocese. To the ill, prisoners, and all of society's marginalized, Bernardin announced the love for life that had illuminated his pastoral ministry and his entire existence.

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:
Samuel Seabury (d. 1796), first Anglican bishop in North America

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (5 hatur/hedar):
Appearance of the head of Longinus, the Soldier (Coptic Orthodox Church)
All Saints (Coptic Catholic Church)
Abba Yohannii of Dabra `Asa (13th cent.), hermit;
End of the flower season (Ethiopian Church)

LUTHERANS:
Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnz (d. 1716), Christian thinker at Hannover

MARONITES:
Philip, apostle

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Philip, apostle
Gregory Palamas, archbishop of Thessaloniki (Greek Church)

WEST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:
Philip, apostle

EAST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:
Josaphat (d. 1623), martyr (Malabar Church)