December 15

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Sanducht (1st cent.) martyr

The princess Sanducht was the daughter of the Armenian king Sanatruk (ca. 75-110), and according to tradition, she became a Christian upon hearing the preaching of the apostle Thaddeus. When her father learned of her conversion, he tried in every manner to make her deny her new faith, without results. The young princess's example had even inspired three of her brothers and many other Armenians to turn to the Gospel.
At the age of eighteen, Sanducht was condemned to death by her father. She is considered the first martyr of the Armenian church, and may have been the first Christian woman in history to be put to death for her faith.
Her memorial is usually celebrated in summer, on the Saturday following the Transfiguration, which is a feast whose date varies in the Armenian church. Today's date is that given in Sanducht's Passio, which was written in the fifth century.

BIBLICAL READINGS

1 Cor 12:28-13:10; Lk 9:1-6

Isaac de Castro Tartas (d. 1647) Jewish martyr

On December 15, 1647 the young Jew Isaac de Castro Tartas died in Lisbon.
He was arrested in Brazil, where he had been living, and taken to Portugal by Inquisition police. Determined to remain faithful to the faith of his fathers even if it cost him his life, Isaac died reciting the Shema' Israel. He was burned alive with five other Jews in one of the most tragic auto-da-fés in Portuguese history. That same day, sixty other Jews were condemned to life imprisonment in Lisbon's jails.
During the Inquisition, approximately 750 auto-da-fés were carried out in the Portuguese territories. Almost 2,000 people were burned at the stake, and about 30,000 people were publicly punished. The majority of the victims were Jews.

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
Peter Canisius (d. 1597), priest and doctor of the church (Ambrosian calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (6 kiyahk/tahsas):
Abraham the Syrian (d. ca. 978), 62th patriarch of Alexandria (Coptic Orthodox Church)

LUTHERANS:
Gerhard Uhlohrn (d. 1901), theologian in Lower Saxony

MARONITES:
Eleutherius and Eusebius (2nd cent.), martyrs

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Eleutherius, bishop of Illyria, hieromartyr
Stephen Uros (d. 1371)
Elisabeth Helen (14th cent.)
Ioannichius of Devic (d. 1430), anchorite (Serbian Church)
Peter the Iberian (d. 491), bishop
Jesse of Tsilk'ani (6th cent.), monk (Georgian Church)
Neomartyrs of Sympheropolis and Crimea (d. 1937-1938; Ukrainian Church)