January 5

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Syncletica (4th cent.) nun

Among the many Christians who went into the Egyptian desert in the fourth century in search of a life of radical faithfulness to the Gospel, there were a number of women who founded semi-anchorite forms of community life. The most famous of these is undoubtedly Syncletica, whose Life was written by a certain Athanasius.
Born into a noble Alexandrian family, but of Macedonian ancestry, Syncletica decided to lead a life of seclusion and prayer after the death of her parents.
She headed for the desert with her sister, who was blind, in search of solitude. With time her reputation grew and many young women came to her, wishing to be guided in the spiritual struggle and in monastic asceticism. Syncletica, overcoming her initial reluctance, founded with them a form of life that was almost cenobitic in character. Life in her community was centered on obedience, which she considered a more certain path to poverty of heart compared with the purification that could be reached through monastic asceticism alone.
Following in the footsteps of Jesus, gentle and humble in heart, Syncletica led her many disciples to the deep joy that is reached in Christian life when one loves enough to empty oneself.
Syncletica died after a long and tragic illness that disfigured her face and left her mute and blind, but did not prevent her from continuing to be an eloquent witness to the good news of the Gospel until the end of her days.

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ARMENIANS:
Eve of the Theophany

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (26 kiyahk/tahsas):
Anastasia the Healer (3rd-4th cent.), martyr (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:
Theophan (d. 1894), monk and spiritual father in Russia

MARONITES:
Paul of Tebe (d. ca. 341), first hermit

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Eve of the Theophany
Theopemptus and Theonas of Nicomedia (3rd cent.), martyrs
Syncletica, nun
Nahum of Ohrid (9th cent.), monk (Serbian Church)