April 7

Aphrahat the Persian sage (4th cent.) monk

Today the Maronite Church commemorates Aphrahat the Persian sage, the first well-known figure from the Syriac churches whose teachings were handed down as an example to posterity.
Aphrahat was born at the end of the third century, probably near Ninive-Mossul, in present-day Iraq. His name reveals that he was probably of pagan ancestry, but his familiarity with Scripture and his approach to biblical exegesis show that he was strongly influenced by Jewish methods.
A member of a church that was breaking free from its Jewish matrix, Aphrahat endured the separation and conflict between Church and synagogue with relative serenity, and his writings on the subject, though polemical, are restrained in tone.
He was a "son of the covenant," committed to celibacy as a way of witnessing to the eschatological reunification of the person inaugurated by the first solitary, Christ, whom the "sons of the covenant" sought to imitate. Aphrahat seems to have lived in the monastery of Mar Mattai, and according to some scholars he became the monks' superior, and then a bishop.
Aphrahat never became involved in the christological controversies that ravaged the West during his lifetime. Instead, he lived as a disciple of Scripture, in his own words. In his Demonstrations, the only work of his that has survived, he left a record of his teachings on the spiritual life and on the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. Written in a sapiential style, this work gives a first glimpe of the delight in spiritual beauty and gentleness that later became one of the hallmarks of Syriac Christianity.

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ARMENIANS:
Annunciation

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
John Baptist de la Salle (d. 1719), presbyter (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (29 baramhat/maggabit):
Glorious annunciation - Conception of the Lord

LUTHERANS:
Albrecht Dürer (d. 1528), painter at Nuremberg
Johann Heinrich Wichern (d. 1881), founder of the Inner missions

MARONITES:
Aphrahat, monk

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Calliopius of Pompeiopolis (d. 304), martyr
George (d. 821), bishop of Melitene
Passing away of Tikhon (d. 1925), patriarch of Moscow (Russian Church)
Justine Popovic (d. 1979), igumen (Serbian Church)
Parthenius of Kiev (d. 1855), monk (Ukrainian Church)