

# June 20

## **Nicola Cabasilas** (ca. 1322-ca. 1397) witness

Today the Orthodox churches commemorate Nicola Cabasilas, a lay theologian and the author of some of the most important spiritual treatises in Byzantine Christianity.

Nicola was born in Thessalonica around the year 1322, into one of the city's well-established middle class families. He learned the prayer of the heart from a disciple of Gregory Palamas, and received an advanced legal and literary education at Constantinople's academy of philosophy, eventually earning a reputation as one of the greatest Byzantine humanists.

The era in which he lived was rife with ecclesial and political tensions, and Nicola played an important role in settling disputes at court and in helping resolve the controversies that had arisen regarding the teaching of the hesychasts of Mt. Athos. He also wrote important treatises, calling for social justice and condemning the practice of usury.

The election of Kallistos I as Patriarch of Constantinople seemed to forecast better times for the Byzantine world, and Cabasilas decided to withdraw from public life. In peace and silence he placed his profound human and spiritual maturity at the service of his contemporaries, writing *The Interpretation of the Holy Liturgy* and *Life in Christ*. These are full-fledged spiritual manuals accessible to lay readers, who are called, as are all Christians, to become holy as they live their daily lives. According to Cabasilas, believers are sanctified through the sacraments and prayer, which allow each person to welcome Christ into his or her heart.

Nicola died sometime between the years 1391 and 1397, without leaving a word of testimony about the last years of his life. He was canonized very recently, in 1983, by the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

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## THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (13 ba'unah/sane):

*Gabriel*, archangel (Coptic Church)

*Lucy* (d. 304), martyr (Coptic Catholic Church)

LUTHERANS:

*Johann Georg Hamann* (d. 1788), theologian in East Prussia

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

*Methodius* (d. 312), bishop of Olympus and Patara, hieromartyr