



OCTOBER FEASTS AND SAINTS



(In last year's series of Bulletins, we covered each month the feasts and saints noted on the calendar put out by the Diocese. This year, we will present each month a few of the feasts and saints which are in the Armenian Church's calendar for the month, but which have not been included in the calendar put out by the Diocese.)

October 4th: Saints Barbara and Thecla

BARBARA was a young girl who lived in the third century, in Asia Minor. Because of her father's possessive love for her, he kept her locked in a tower away from contact with other people so that she would not come to love anyone except him. But Barbara's solitude made her notice and begin thinking about the wonders of creation which surrounded her, and she began pondering who had created such wonders. Finally she concluded that there must be one Creator, who must love mankind very much in order to give such beauty to the world.

After many years, her father regretted his isolation of Barbara and allowed her to mix with people, hoping she might marry. She met a group of Christians, and heard them talk about God the Creator, and about Christ. Now Barbara knew that the One who loved mankind was this same God, and she was converted to Christianity.

Her father, furious, sent her to the governor (as one was required to do in those days when Christianity was an illegal religion.) The governor tried to get Barbara to renounce her faith, but she would not, and she was executed.

(Students might be interested in noticing how all of Barbara's father's efforts produced the opposite results of those he wanted. Perhaps this shows first that we must not try to possess and control another person's life, and also that there are many roads to Christian faith, even those which seem most unlikely.)

THECLA was converted to Christianity by St. Paul, at Iconium. She is one of the very first women martyrs, and a church was built over the site of her tomb at Meriamlik, near Seleucia.

October 26: Saint Dionysius the Areopagite; Apostles Timothy and Titus

DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE lived in the sixth century, and was a mystical theologian and writer. One of his best-known writings is "On

the Divine Names" in which he writes about the being and attributes of God. Another is "The Mystical Theology," an account of the way a person's soul can, through much effort, work toward union with God. Dionysius had great influence on the medieval theology of the Eastern and Western churches.

TIMOTHY went with St. Paul on the second missionary journey. He traveled to Corinth and to Thessalonica, and later became the first Bishop of Ephesus. He was the son of a pagan father and a Jewish mother who had been converted to Christianity, and we know that he became an apostle at an early age, because it was to him that St. Paul wrote, "Let no one despise your youth." (Students might wish to think about the meaning of these words — that even a young person who loves God and does His work can lead others, as Timothy did.) Timothy died at the hands of pagans when he opposed their worship of the goddess Diana.

TITUS went with St. Paul on his journey to the Council of Jerusalem in about 49 A.D. He did a great deal of mission work in Crete, and was the first bishop there. It was also Titus who reconciled the Corinthians with St. Paul, after they had become offended by his scolding at the way they conducted themselves.

It was to Timothy and Titus that Paul wrote his 3 "pastoral epistles" as they are called, because they deal partly with pastoral problems and suggestions for ways to minister to different kinds of people. These 3 letters were most likely written during the last year of Paul's life.

October 30: St. Joseph of Arimathea, Lazarus, Mary and Martha the Sisters

These four familiar Biblical figures are remembered together on one day, and we may wonder why the Church groups them. It is because each one had an important connection with the Resurrection, either by faith or action. It was Joseph of Arimathea who asked for the body of Christ after the crucifixion, so that he could bury it. Lazarus, of course, was raised from the dead by Christ as a pre-figuring of His own resurrection, and the sisters Mary and Martha were faithful witnesses of that event and of the Resurrection of the Lord.

So the Church shows us this group of people who, by their real faith, were able to take part in the life of the Lord, and urges us to do the same.