

Who Are the Saints?



ABOUT THE SAINTS

You remember from a previous lesson that St. Gregory the Illuminator belongs to a group of saints who enlightened whole countries. There are many such groups of saints. Here are a few:

Queens, Kings, Emperors

Most of these brought large numbers of their subjects with them when they converted to the faith. Some gave up their thrones and went into monasteries.

Unmercenary Healers

“Unmercenary” means not asking pay for your service to others. Two of the best-known saints in this group are Cosmos and Damian, who were both doctors and healed the sick, charging them nothing.

Mendicants (Beggars)

These were people who deliberately lived in poverty and by the charity of others. Some had been born rich and gave away all they had in order to devote their whole lives to Christ.

Patriarchs, Bishops, Abbots, Priests, Deacons

Some of these suffered or were martyred. Some lived holy lives and inspired others to do the same.

Some were scholars and great preachers, like St. John Chrysostom.

Monks and Nuns

Many of these people were martyred in Rome, and long afterwards too. Some were very learned and wrote, painted holy pictures, or taught in the churches. St. Gregory of Narek is one of these. Among them too are hymn-writers and musicians like St. Nersess Shnorhali.

Holy Women

The women who brought spices to anoint Christ's body are among this group. There are also many widows, wives, deaconesses, nuns and abbesses, and others who lived holy lives. Priscilla, one of St. Paul's followers, is an example.

Let's take a closer look at one group of saints by noting the words of a hymn from our Sunrise Service (usually done during Lent in our churches). Read the words, then answer the questions.

O HERMITS OF GOD

I. O hermits of God and heirs to the kingdom of heaven, who did exchange the passing things and received the good things that pass not away; intercede with the Lord for the children of the Church.

II. O glorious champions and the beloved of the heavenly Father, who were baptized in your blood together with Christ into the death of the Cross; intercede with the Lord for the children of the Church.

III. O beloved martyrs and habitations of the Spirit of truth, who did conquer by the

Spirit your desires and passions; intercede with the Lord for the children of the Church.

IV. O praised ones of the world and desirable ones of the supernal dominions, who did attain the part of beatitude before all the sons of men; intercede with the Lord for the children of the Church.

V. O willing sacrifices, children of age and perfect in wisdom, who did drink the exulting wine, instead of the milk; intercede with the Lord for the children of the Church.

What do you think “hermit” means here?

What does “who did conquer by the Spirit your desires and passions” mean?

What does “drink the exulting wine instead of the milk” mean?

Why do you think we ask these saints, or any saints, to pray for us?

Just for your information, here’s a passage taken from a recent *Time* magazine, about a desert monk (hermit or anchorite) Matthew the Poor, who had recently written a new book called *The Communion of Love*.

He is not canonized, of course, but what *Time* says about him shows that, today in our world, there are still those following the way of the type of saint we read about in the hymn.

"In the ancient monastery of Deir el Makarios in the desert 50 miles southwest of Cairo, a Coptic monk is causing a mild sensation, drawing as many as 500 visitors a day. His name: Matta el Meskin, Matthew the Poor. Like the great anchorite St. Anthony, Matta el Meskin was once an affluent young man — a prosperous pharmacist. At the age of 29, heeding Jesus' call to 'sell what you have,' he disposed of his two houses, two cars, two pharmacies, gave the proceeds to the poor and, keeping only a cloak, devoted himself

to prayer and asceticism. He is out of the world and yet still of it. From his cell, where he lives mainly on bread and water, he has written more than 40 books and pamphlets, most of them scholarly books on church affairs, directed the total rehabilitation of the (monastery) and begun a reformation of Coptic monastic life so profound that he was one of three nominees to be Coptic Pope in the 1971 election."

Note: The Coptic Church is a close Orthodox "sister" of the Armenian Church.



Soorp
(Saint)
Մուրր