

Yet eloquent guidelines for these can be found in the Scriptures of the Church. Describing the good life (as God sees it) and true character of the prayer, fasting, and almsgiving that are to mark our next 40 days, the Scripture readings for Poon Paregentan (Isaiah 58:1-14; Romans 13:11-14:23 and Matthew 6 and 7) remind us that:

(as we celebrate Paradise on Carnival Day): God has clothed the lilies of the field and feeds the birds of the air. What need is there for us to worry about what to eat, what to wear, what to do? We cannot be anxious about tomorrow; rather we need to treat the world and each other as holy and everything falls into place. (Matthew 6, 7)

(as we set aside monies for charity): Give secretly, without fanfare; the reward in giving is not in public appreciation but in God's pleasure in righteousness. (Matthew 6:2-4)

(as we pray and fast): Don't pray with empty words, fast conspicuously, or judge the piety of others. (Romans 14)

(as we prepare to be "good Christians" during Lent): God's choice for good works and humbling is not Sunday piety or 40-day goodness. Rather he wants that we "loose the bonds of wickedness, free the oppressed, share our bread with the hungry, bring the homeless into our own homes and cover the naked . . . this is what I choose . . . [not just] a day to humble oneself." (Isaiah 58:5-7)

This is the real invitation of Poon Paregentan, an invitation we can only accept fully during Lent: to transform a season of good works into a lifetime of authentic and potent faith.

— E.A.

SAINTS IN THE FEBRUARY CALENDAR

Saint Theodore the Warrior February 15

Saint Theodore the Warrior was born in the village of Sabou in the province of Amasia in Asia Minor. He was the son of pious parents. During the reign of Emperor Maximus, he belonged to a special group of soldiers called "New-arrivals."



One day while traveling he encountered a great beast which he slew by means of his faith and a lance. It was then discovered that he was a Christian. He was called before the court and questioned concerning his faith; he answered boldly. Later at night, he went to the temple of the great goddess Hera which he set on fire.

Because of these actions, he was tortured and put in prison. While in prison he was comforted by a heavenly vision. Once again he was called for questioning before the court and again he spoke boldly on behalf of Christianity. He was burned alive in 306 A.D. His relics were translated to a church by the faithful.

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, Patriarch February 22

St. Cyril was born near Jerusalem to Christian parents in 315 A.D. He was ordained a priest in 345 A.D. and elected Patriarch of Jerusalem in 350 A.D. He was beloved of all Orthodox Christians for his wisdom and virtuous lifestyle. St. Cyril ascended to the Patriarchal See when the Church was distracted by the Arian heresy. Because of his rejection of the Arians, he was forced from the Patriarchal See but returned during the reign of Julian the Apostate. St. Cyril was witness to the vain attempt of Julian to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem. The Arians were able to once again remove him from his Patriarchal See, but again he was restored as patriarch, this time by the Holy Council of Constantinople.

During his patriarchate the miracle of the Apparition of the Holy Cross took place in Jerusalem, at which time he wrote a letter describing the miraculous event to Emperor Constantius.

One of the most glorious and fruitful results of his spiritual leadership was the conversion of many pagans. On this occasion he delivered a number of sermons which are noted for their wonderful clarity of Christian doctrines and teachings. Many of these sermons appear in a work entitled "A Call to Service" which was translated, along with his letter to Emperor Constantius, into Armenian during the Golden Age.

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