

January 28

F. † Our Ven. Father Ephraim the Syrian



Ven. Ephraim, who through his lofty teachings earned the name of Syrian prophet and teacher, was born at the beginning of the Fourth Century in Nisibis, Mesopotamia of rather poor farmer parents, who were distinguished for their Christian virtues and nurtured their son in the awe of God.

But the youthful years of Ephraim did not pass without some passion and stumbling. Impetuous by nature he was irritable and in his youth as he himself said quite often quarreled and even foolishly doubted the Providence of God. Having been falsely accused of stealing sheep he was imprisoned. Here Ephraim was worthy to hear a voice calling him to piety. Acquitted by the court and released from prison and seeing in this the hand of God wisely ruling the world, he abandoned the idea about the situation controlled by man and learned that "there is an Eye, observing all things" and punishing any crime.

Returning home, he abandoned the world and settled in the mountains to be with James of Nisibis (see Jan. 13). Under the direction of James he practiced the strict asceticism of piety and fervently studied the Holy Scriptures. For his pious, truly ascetical life all the citizens of Nisibis greatly respected him and lovingly looked upon him as a saint.

Slandered with heavy sin by the envy of one of his namesakes, he voluntarily took up the heavy fault. But when rumors about this led people into powerful temptation, the venerable one, with the help of God to end the temptation, wonderfully planted the heavy charge hanging over him and after this they began to relate to him with even greater love and respect.

After the Persians captured Nisibis in 363, he abandoned it. Having settled on a certain mountain in the city of Edessa [Urfa], he led a strict ascetic life and continued to be occupied in studying the Holy Scriptures. Crowds of people soon started to flow to his solitary cave, desiring to receive instruction from him. St. Ephraim taught the people faith and piety, both orally and in writing, and soon with great success he opened a school, from which subsequently came famous teachers of the Syrian Church. He convinced his hearers to lead a moral life and strictly condemned the false teachers then roiling Christian society. Hearing the preaching of the holy ascetic, many of the Syrian pagans converted to Christianity.

Towards the end of his life St. Ephraim traveled to Egypt, visited St. Basil the Great in Caesarea who ordained him a deacon. Later St. Basil the Great wanted to consecrate him a bishop, but humble Ephraim rejected this dignity and peacefully died as a deacon in 373 in Edessa [Urfa].

God has glorified Ven. Ephraim with the gift of working wonders. Released from all terrestrial attachments, surrendering to continual prayer, fasting, vigils,

meditation on God, disinterestedness, charity and serving neighbors, extraordinary humble ascetic, zealous and subtle expositor of heretics, tireless and thoughtful commentator on Holy Scripture, sincere and skilful hymnographer, rare expert on the heart of man and most fervent preacher of repentance and moral renewal, Ven. Ephraim really contained in himself, in the words of St. Gregory the Theologian, all those distinctive marks of a person in God.

St. Ephraim left many works, doctrinal, commentarial, polemical and moral and they are as various, deep and instructive as any of the works of the ecumenical Fathers of the Greek Church. Best of all he wrote about the destruction of the intimate, about the necessity to continually shed tears of repentance. Knowledge of the spiritual nature of man in the way of constant self-deepening, condescending love for the fallen, infirm person, acquired from the knowledge of his own infirmities and from reflection about the great love of the Redeemer for the people, fervor and burning inspiration glistens in each teaching of the teacher-ascetic. These are the qualities encouraging special appeal to his moral teaching, irresistibly working directly on the heart and will of the reader. The teaching of St. Ephraim shocks and afflicts the soul with fear, but at the same time also calms it, filling it with tenderness and forcing it to shed tears. St. Ephraim left many touching prayers and prayerful hymns. By the way, the deeply touching stichera sung during the Burial Service belong to him. Among the prayers he composed is the especially famous tenderly touching prayer read during the days of the Great Fast: "O Lord and Master of my life".

Kontakion tone 2

**Foreseeing the hour of everlasting judgment,
You sobbed bitterly as a loving anchorite, O Ephraim:
You were a teacher who performed his duties, O Venerable One:
Therefore you awaken the slothful to repentance, O Universal Father.**

Epistle: Gal. 5:22-26; 6:1-2; sel. 213. **Gospel:** Mt. 11:27-30; sel. 43.

Commemoration of our Ven. Father Theodosius of Totma, Head and Founder of the Savior-Sumorin Monastery and Newly Revealed Wonderworker

Ven. Theodosius Sumorin was born during the reign of Tsar Basil Ivanovich in the city of Vologda and was brought up in the fear of God and Christian piety. At the insistence of his parents, he married and had a daughter. But home life did not distract him from love for God. He fervently went to church, frequently prayed at home and especially at night. After the death of his parents and his wife, he enrolled in the number of monks of the Vologda - Prilukian Monastery of Ven. Demetrius (Feb. 11). In the monastery Theodosius underwent heavy obediences: he carried water, cut fire wood, baked bread and at the same time observed a strict fast and lifted up prayers to God.

On behalf of the Hegumen of the monastery having gone to Totma to oversee the monastery salt trade, he asked for a decision of Tsar Ivan Vasilievich and blessing of the Hegumen to found a monastery near Totma. In 1554 the Tsar appointed Theodosius as the Rector of the newly constructed Monastery, issuing an unconditional decree releasing it from all taxation.

St. Theodosius also edified his brethren with examples of his life and the writings of the Holy Fathers, deliberately obtained for this purpose for them. At the same time continuing his ascetic life, he exhausted his body with chains and hair sackcloth.

The Venerable One reposed in 1568 and was buried in the monastery founded by him (see Vologda Diocese). Many wonders were done at his grave. The solemn opening and honoring of his holy relics January 28, the day of the repose of Ven. Theodosius, followed from the September 30, 1798 ukase of Emperor Paul given to the Holy Synod. The special service for this Saint is published by the Synodal printing house in a separate booklet, but only the Troparion and Kontakion are located in the Monthly Menaion.

Troparion, tone 1

**O Venerable Theodosius,
Having inculcated from youth the desire for Christ God,
Whom for city and country you forsook vain glory, considering it as dust,
You followed Saint Demetrius and were a co-inhabitant of his monastery.
Having emigrated to the city of Totma and having settled between two rivers,
You exhausted your body with fasting, vigils, hair clothing and chains:
Therefore for the sake of God, who having seen your labors,
Enriched you with wonders after your repose:
Expelling of evil spirits and enlightening the blind.
Deliver from every infirmity and misfortune all coming to you in faith singing:
Glory to Him, who gave you strength,
Glory to the One, who crowned you,
Glory to Him, who with you is the healing of all.**

Kontakion, tone 8

**With abstinence you exhausted the flesh,
And with continuous prayers like an angel raised all,
With streams of tears you drowned regiments of demons.
Now in the unvesperal light you exult before Christ God,
And you abundantly grant healing to those coming to your holy tomb,
In faith do we sing to you:
Rejoice, O Divinely-wise Theodosius.**

Matins Gospel: Mt. 11:27-30; sel. 43. **Epistle:** see Jan. 15. **Gospel:** Lk. 6:17-23; sel. 24.

*Ven. Ephraim, Archimandrite of the Sts. Boris and Gleb Monastery,
Wonderworker of Novotorg*

Born in Hungary, he was an equerry for the Holy Right-believing Princes Boris and Gleb (see May 2). Together with his brothers, George and Moses, he was in the service of the princes. After the murder of the holy princes, he accepted monasticism in the Kiev Monastery of the Caves, and then left for the right shore of the Tvertsa River. Here, near Torzhok in the market place where tradesmen, both Christians and pagans, gathered that became useful for spreading the Christian faith, he constructed a hospitality home. When the relics of the Holy Princes Boris and Gleb were uncovered, Ven. Ephraim built a temple in honor of the holy martyrs and founded a monastery in their name. In this monastery he practiced asceticism in fasting and prayer and zealously catechized the brethren in piety. He died in extreme old age on January 28, 1053. According to his will, the head of his brother George, who was killed with St. Boris, was placed in the tomb with him. The relics of St. Ephraim, found incorrupt in 1572, openly repose in the monastery founded by him (see Tver Diocese). Many believers received healing at his tomb.

Ven. Ephraim of the Caves, Bishop of Pereiaslavl

Before being tonsured into monasticism he was treasurer at the court of Great Prince Iziaslav Iaroslavich and administered all his facilities. Being weighed down by the noisy and bustling life at the court; he left to go to Ven. Anthony of the Caves and there joined the brethren. Being a monk, in 1063 he traveled to Constantinople, where, on behalf of Ven. Theodosius, copied the Ustav [Typikon] of the Studite Monastery. After returning he was consecrated Bishop Pereiaslavl and later became Metropolitan of Kiev. Ven. Ephraim signed himself with deeds of Christian piety: he built many churches, constructed hospitals where patients were treated gratis, and in general, was a co-sufferer with the poor and the suffering. He died in 1096. His relics now repose in the caves of Ven. Anthony.

Ven. Palladius, the Hermit

He practiced asceticism in a certain mountain cave near Antioch, Syria. For his lofty way of life he was awarded with the gift of working wonders by the Lord. A merchant who was killed by robbers was found near his cave. The people accused St. Palladius of murder. But, after the prayer of the saint, the victim rose and exposed the guilty. The Venerable One died peacefully at the end of the Fourth Century, having left some instructive writings for the use of believers.