

## *December 4*

### 5. 🛐 *Holy Great Martyr Barbara and With Her the Martyr Juliana*



The Holy Martyrs Barbara and Juliana suffered for Christ in Heliopolis, Phoenicia about the year 306. St. Barbara was the special daughter of a notable and rich pagan Dioscorus who, after the death of his wife, concentrated all his love on his daughter, cherished and kept her, "as the apple of his eye". Barbara surpassed all her contemporaries in beauty and Dioscorus "built a high pillar for her, and on this pillar built a beautiful chamber and shut his daughter in it, so that his beautiful daughter would not be seen by simple people of low birth, for in his opinion, they are not worthy to be seen by the eyes of the beautiful person his daughter is". Enclosed on the lonely pillar, surrounded by directresses and pagan slaves assigned to her, the young maiden saw only the sky and the ground. Contemplation of objects, natural phenomena and reflection about them instilled in the heart of the wise maiden doubt in the truth of the pagan gods, and, with the help of the grace of God, led her to ideas about the true wise Creator of the world. Day and night she had no rest, fervently wishing to learn about the true God and the Creator of all. Her heart did not attach itself to anything terrestrial. She "did not love gold, nor expensive pearls nor the most precious stones, nor in ornamented clothing, in which maidens adorn themselves, nor in what brothers think, but all her thoughts deepened only towards the One God, to be in the fullness of His love". When the holy child came of age, Dioscorus began to offer her to various eminent grooms, but the chaste maiden responded to the offer of the father with resolute refusal. Dioscorus, hoping, that St. Barbara would in due course change her mind left her alone, and went on a distant journey and willed to give St. Barbara full freedom to leave wherever she needed to and to do everything that she wished. With the secret guidance of God, St. Barbara gathered together Christian maidens from whom she received her first concepts about the true God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, according to her wish to know truth more perfectly, a Christian presbyter in the guise of a passing merchant appeared before her, and opened to her the mysteries of the holy Christian faith, taught her to worship the true God in spirit and in truth, established the rules of the Christian life, enlightened her with holy baptism and, again gave her guidance of the grace of the one God, without revealing the instructor and the director, went away. The wise

maiden, united to Christ, decided to always belong to Him alone, so that she had stood in this spiritually mysterious betrothal to the heavenly Bridegroom. Dioscorus, having found out about the conversion of his daughter to Christianity, was inflamed with mad hatred and rage because of her. Having seized a sword, he, in an attack of fury, wanted to strike his daughter with it, but she rushed away from him. The mad father pursued and followed after her, for however long she was not hidden from his eyes but she disappeared, by the power of God, into the stony mountain before her. When the holy martyr, being pointed out by one shepherd, was found by her father, he then began to brutally torture her. He unmercifully beat her, dragged her by the hair over sharp stones, secluded her in a dark room and starved her. But, as his fury and rage was awful, she appeared weak but with wisdom and strong in faith before the young maidens. St. Barbara remained unshakable. To all the efforts of her father to get her to return to believe in the pagan gods, she answered with the wise accusation that the dead idols were vain and that it was madness worshipping them. And her faith could neither be shaken by "sweetness, nor corporal kindness, nor riches, nor torments" nor by any sly tricks in the pagan world. Then the infuriated father goes to the ruler Marcian, and asks him to use all forms of torture to turn his daughter away from Christ the Lord, even to renounce very name of the father. And here the holy maiden is before the ruler, vested with all his authority, surrounded with all sorts of instruments of torture. The torturer offered kindness and persuasion, honor and pleasures to seduce the young inexperienced maiden. The holy woman martyr replies to him with her confession of the one God and with insult to the soulless idols. The embittered torturer orders her to be stripped naked and to beat her dry veins, until the ground was no longer empurpled with her blood, until there was no more flesh to be torn, until there were no more bones to be naked. In silence the holy one suffers this furious tearing of the flesh. All her soul was raised up by faith and hope to heaven, all her heart poured out in silent prayer to her heavenly Bridegroom. The torturers, in order to produce the most severe pain, rubbed with finely chopped up hair the tormented body of the holy woman martyr, and, finally, dragged the half-dead and half-living holy sufferer and thrown her into prison. Here the holy woman martyr fervently prays to the Lord, but not for ending the torments, but about strengthening herself for more tortures. Her body burns from scorching wounds, but her heart burns still with the strongest fire of Divine love. In her mouth blood coagulates, but her spirit rises, as a flame, to the heights, to the mighty God, to life. At midnight a heavenly light brightened the gloomy prison and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself was revealed "in the unapproachable light to the prisoner in the prison, to issue the command, healing both wounds and granting joy". After such consolation with uninterrupted joy the holy maiden went through new tortures even unto death. They hung her up on a tree, planed her flesh with

iron claws, poured out fire baring her ribs, cut off her breasts and beat her head with a hammer. The holy maiden underwent all with courage in her heart, with joy in her person, and with a prayer on her lips. Finally, all the rage of torturers was exhausted before the patience of the great woman martyr, and condemned her to be beheaded. Her cruel hearted father beheaded her daughter. Before her death, St. Barbara prayed to the Lord for everyone who honors her memory, "that sudden illness would not come near him, and that unintentional death would not take him away" \_). In the Fourth or Sixth century the relics of St. Barbara were transferred to Constantinople where a magnificent temple was constructed in her honor (which was used as a right of sanctuary, and those convicted of crimes and subject to the penalty of the law found safe haven in it). Today the relics of St. Barbara openly rest in Kiev, in the Golden Domed St. Michael's Monastery (see the Kievan Diocese) where they were transferred in 1108. The Greek Princess Barbara, daughter of Alexis Comnenus, was married to Grand Duke Sviatopolk (II)-Michael. "When the All-blessed Juliana, seeing the glorious Martyr Barbara during her terrible trial suffering from her many wounds, her body painfully torn in many places," but bearing all the tortures with firmness, convicted the ruler (hegemon) of cruelty and unfairness, after many tortures was beheaded for this. The brutal torturers Dioscorus and Marcian soon "underwent the sudden judgment of God": they were burnt by lightning. \_).

*Troparion, tone 8*

**Let us honor the Holy Martyr Barbara,  
For like a bird she escaped the snares of the enemy, //  
And destroyed them with the help and defense of the cross.**

*Kontakion, tone 4*

**You piously followed God hymning the Holy Trinity,  
O Martyred One,  
You renounced the multitude of idols.  
You were not frightened by the threats of your torturers,  
O Long-suffering Barbara.  
In the midst of your ascetic efforts, you ever bravely cried out: //  
I honor the Trinity as the Only Divine One.**

**Epistle:** Gal. 3:23-29; sel. 208. **Gospel:** Mk. 5:24-34; sel. 21.

*Our Venerable Father John of Damascus*

The son of a famous dignitary serving at the court of the Damascus Caliph Abdalmalik, he received a high Christian education and was made the mayor of Damascus. He always valued the higher truth of life and zealously pursued the

truth in the hope of salvation. During the reign of Emperor Leo the Isaurian, St. John, "fired up with zeal", revealed as the courageous defender of icon veneration, and full of fervent faith, indestructible persuasiveness and the living eloquence in writing in defense of icon veneration, strongly influenced his contemporaries. The Emperor, wishing to ruin John sent a slanderous letter to the Caliph accusing John of treason to his master. The Caliph believed the slander and issued an order to chop off John's right hand. But after the prayer of St. John, the hand wonderfully was joined to the joint (see June 28). Soon after this St. John entered the Monastery of St. Sabbas the Sanctified in Palestine as a monk. Here no one wished to be the spiritual preceptor of the well-known learned theologian and when finally an interested person was found, who as proof of his obedience, meanwhile, forbade the Venerable John to write anything. The Venerable John obediently carried out this obedience for a long time but when one of the brothers persistently asked him to compose a graveside hymn on the occasion of the death of his brother, who was a monk in the monastery, the Venerable John touched by the tears of the unfortunate one, did not hold back and wrote those highly, poetical, tender hymns, which from then on are sung in our Church during the burial service. The Starets, the preceptor of Venerable John, forgave him the infringement of his obedience and gave permission to write only after the Ven. John explicitly did his special assignments for penance, consisting in the cleaning of all dirty places in the monastery. Elevated to the rank of presbyter by the Jerusalem patriarch, Ven. John lived for a short time in Jerusalem. A few times he was imprisoned for his zeal for Orthodoxy. The rest of his days the Ven. John lived in the St. Sabbas Monastery where he practiced asceticism up to an extreme old age in deep humility and obedience, and wrote the famous theological treatises and those wonderful church hymns, which the Orthodox Church sings from that time until today. His "Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith" presents his first work of learned Christian theology, and serves hitherto as a paradigm for theologians. Besides the tender hymns for the Burial Service the Ven. John wrote some especially remarkable hymns: The Octoechos, the service for Pascha, the Canons for Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension, etc. He wrote 64 Canons in all. The Ven. John was called the "Golden Strings" for his soul inspiring fervent church hymns. He died in 777.

*Kontakion, tone 4*

**Let us praise John, the composer of hymns and honorable spokesman of God,  
The teacher and instructor of the church,  
The antagonist of enemies:  
For he took up the weapon, the Cross of the Lord,  
And overcame the temptation of heresy,  
And stands as a warm intercessor before God,  
To grant to all the remission of sins.**

*Ven. John, Bishop of Polybotum (in Phrygia).*

He is known as the one who exposed the heresy and impiety of Emperor Leo the Isaurian. He died at the beginning of the Eighth century. The Lord granted him the gift to heal infirmities and expel evil spirits throughout his life.

*Hieromartyr Seraphim, Bishop of Phanarion*

He was born in the village of Biszoula, Agrapha region. He was tonsured as a monk in the Cold Spring Monastery (Monastery of the Theotokos in Corona), and then was elected Bishop of Phanarion and Neochorion. For refusing to become a Moslem after torture the Turks put him on a stake in 1601. His head is in the Cold Spring Monastery, and became known for many miracles.

*Repose of St. Gennadius, Archbishop of Novgorod*

At first he was a monk in the Valaam Monastery, from where he was then elected an archimandrite of the Chudov Monastery in Moscow. In 1484 he was consecrated as the Archbishop of Novgorod. As a dignified man and an expert in Holy Scriptures, he "made many corrections of the display of church elegance and about the sacerdotal order", also worked hard at the refutation and destruction of the Judaizer heresy, which appeared in his time, composed the definition of the 70 Paschal numbers for eight thousand years, and wrote "a key for the cycle of Pascha for the next 532 years". He was a zealous advocate of education and arranged for protégés in the sacred-church-service positions in the Novgorod school. In 1504, St. Gennadius retired from the management of the diocese and before his death he practiced asceticism in the Chudov Monastery. He died in 1505. His relics are in the Chudov Monastery.

*Damascus Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos*

According to an ancient tradition, this holy icon was written by St. John of Damascus in gratitude to the Mother of God for the wonderful healing of his right hand cut off because of the slander of the iconoclast Leo the Isaurian (refer to June 28).

\_) Not only all the Orthodox world reverentially honors the Holy Great Martyr Barbara, but also Catholics and Lutherans pray to her for protection in illnesses and from dangers in their life.

\_) On December 4 in some districts peasants celebrate the special holiday in honor of "the Divine Candle". Within three days up to this feast the peasant who has this candle "waits" (the peasants take a candle for themselves for the home, serially or according to the promise where it is kept, - "waits", - up to the next feast

in its honor), harnesses a horse and goes around the village, collecting from each house, "what God has sent". They give him flour, buckwheat groats and other things and he, having collected these supplies, sells them, and with the money received from the sale buys wax, vodka, fine wheat flour and fish for the feast. On the evening of the feast itself, men, women and even children gather in the house where the candle is found. Adults then offer some kopecks of money, as special offerings. The "waxer (nadsukivaljshchik)" comes, and the host takes some warm wax from the stove. The waxer removes his outer clothing, rolls up his sleeves, takes the wax and makes some flat cakes out of them. Then he takes a large cone-shaped candle out from a tub sitting on the table, removes the white calico sarafan "from the candle" and sticks the wax flat cakes on top of it - "waxes it". Then the waxer puts the same sarafan back on the candle, and puts it in a forward corner, under a shelf, and quietly lights it with a hemp match. After this the common prayer of the guests begins. Everyone falls on a knee and before anything else calls out to the candle: "You are our Mother! Do not abandon us sinners without your mercy! ". Then they address the icon of Nicholas the Wonderworker: "Mikola have mercy! Be our defender! ". After this, the praying ones rise to their feet and, even having made some low bows, remain completely motionless for five minutes. "The old men destroyers begin, then, the host, not turning around: Who wishes to take the Divine candle? Or who will take a turn? ". Silence. Again they fall on their knees, and repeat this up to three times. After the third question the host asks: "who wishes to take the candle to God?" "The destroyer" is trying to discover the interested person, and speaks: "Apparently I will work, Mikola". The host puts the candle wrapped in the caftan or a short fur coat to him that in turn comes back to him, and so up to three times. After this ceremony the destroyer takes on the care of the candle, and together with it the offered money. After this the common supper begins, a table for three, four or more, according to the number of visitors and the amount of prepared food. Here there is soup, kasha, fish pie, and beer with vodka. The origin of this stupid feast still waits for an explanation. Undoubtedly, it has its beginning in the ancient times of paganism. Certainly it is not necessary for Christians to create such feasts and the pastors of the Church should try to root out the unchristian custom of the celebration of the candle where that custom exists.

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900), pp 440-4.  
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