

December 29

A. Holy Fourteen Thousand Children Slain for Christ's sake by Herod in Bethlehem



Having learned from the Magi about the birth of the King of the Jews, our Lord Jesus Christ, and being afraid that this King would deprive him of his throne, Herod commanded that all children of the male gender two years old and younger be killed in Bethlehem and its vicinity. This inhuman decree was fulfilled, but, on the command of God, the holy family fled to Egypt (see Dec. 26). Near the cave of the Nativity of Christ (see page 230) there is a cave where the Roman Catholics built an altar in the name of the Holy Children Martyrs and where their sacred remains are stored behind an iron grating.

Kontakion, tone 4

**The star sent the Magi to the One being born,
And Herod cruelly sent an unjust army,
Thinking to slay Him
Lying as a Child in a manger.**

Epistle: 2 Cor. 5:15-21; sel. 180. **Gospel:** See Dec. 26.

Our Ven. Father Marcella, Hegumen of the Monastery of the Sleepless Ones

Born in Apamea, Syria, he first practiced asceticism in Ephesus, but then transferred to the Monastery of the Sleepless Ones in Constantinople (Refer to Feb. 23) where for his virtuous life he was also chosen to be the rector. He died about the year 486.

Ven. Thaddeus the Confessor, Disciple and Servant of St. Theodore the Studite (see Nov. 11)

During the reign of Emperors Michael and Theophilus he suffered for iconolatriy and died three days after being beating.

*Venerable Mark the Cave-dweller, Theophilus the Weeper and John of the
Monastery of the Caves*

They practiced asceticism at the end of 11th and the beginning of the 12th centuries in the Kievan Monastery of the Caves. Ven. Mark, pure in heart, simple in life, was occupied with digging caves and graves. For this heavy work he never took anything, unless, someone gave him something, and he distributed whatever he received to the poor. His flesh was weighed down carrying heavy chains and which now hang above his relics. Here will also be found his copper hollowed cross, which served him with a measure of water to quench his thirst when thirst tormented him. He no longer drank water, only the amount held in his cross. Through his ascetical efforts Ven. Mark so pleased the Lord that the dead obeyed his commands. Ven. Theophilus cried so much about his sins before his death that he lost his sight. His brother, Ven. John, who became known for marvelous asceticism, died before him. These relics are in the St. Anthony's Cave. There is a special service with the Polyeleon for Ven. Mark and Ven. Theophilus.

Ven. Benjamin, ascetic of Mount Nitria (in Egypt) died in the year 392.

Ven. Athenodorus was the disciple of Ven. Pachomius the Great (see May 15).

George, Bishop of Nicomedia

He was the contemporary of Patriarch Photius (see Feb. 6) with whom he shared the afflictions of life. He is known as the author of Canons. He died in the 9th century.

Memory of all Christians, who died from hunger, thirst, by sword and freezing. Their synaxis is served in the temple of the Theotokos in Chalcoopratiya (in Constantinople) where the holy ark with the sash of the Most Holy Theotokos was placed.

*S. V. Bulgakov, Handbook for Church Servers, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. -485.
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