

Date: November 17, 2020

Subject: BURL-Choir Holy Martyrs Acindynus Onesiphorus and Porphyrius and Venerable Matrona
Weekend NOTICE

Dorogiye družiya!

This Saturday/Sunday the Church commemorates the martyrs Onesiphorus (in Slavonic: Onisifar) and Porphyrius (in Slavonic: Porfiri) of Ephesus (an ancient city in Turkey's Central Aegean region), and Venerable Matrona, Abbess of Constantinople.

The attached Tropar / Kondak text sheet for this weekend is attached, and includes the special prayers that will be sung at our services this weekend.

Brief summaries about martyrs Onisifar and Porfiri, and Venerable Matrona are provided below.

**** MARTYRS ONESIPHORUS AND PORPHYRIUS OF EPHESUS

The Holy Martyrs Onesiphorus and Porphyrius of Ephesus suffered during the persecution against Christians by the emperor Diocletian (284-305). They beat them and burned them. After this, they tied the saints to wild horses, which dragged them over the stones, after which the Martyrs Onesiphorus and Porphyrius died. Believers gathered the remains of the saints and reverently buried them.

**** VENERABLE MATRONA, ABBESS OF CONSTANTINOPLE

Saint Matrona, Abbess of Constantinople was born in the city of Perge Pamphylia (Asia Minor) in the fifth century. They gave her in marriage to a wealthy man named Dometian. When her daughter Theodota was born, they resettled in Constantinople. The twenty-five-year-old Matrona loved to walk to the temple of God. She spent entire days there, ardently praying to the Lord and weeping for her sins.

At the church the saint met two pious Eldresses, Eugenia and Susanna, who from their youth lived there in asceticism, work and prayer. Matrona began to imitate the God-pleasing life of an ascetic, humbling her flesh by abstinence and fasting, for which she had to endure criticism by her husband.

Her soul yearned for a full renunciation of the world. After long hesitation, Saint Matrona decided to leave her family and entreated the Lord to reveal whether her intent was pleasing to Him. The Lord heard the prayer of His servant. Once, during a light sleep, she had a dream that she had fled from her husband, who was in pursuit of her. The saint concealed herself in a crowd of monks approaching her, and her husband did not notice her. Matrona accepted this dream as a divine directive to enter a men's monastery, where her husband would not think to look for her.

She gave her fifteen-year-old daughter to be raised by the Eldress Susanna, and having cut her own hair and disguised herself in men's attire, she went to the monastery of Saint Bassion. There the Nun Matrona passed herself off as the eunuch Babylos and was accepted as one of the brethren. Apprehensive lest the monks learn that she was a woman, the saint passed her time in constant quietude and much work. The brethren marveled at the great virtue of Babylos.

One time the saint was working in the monastery vineyard with the other monks. The novice monk Barnabas noted that her ear-lobe was pierced and asked about it. "It is necessary, brother, to till the soil and not watch other people, which is not proper for a monk," answered the saint.

After a certain while it was revealed in a dream to Saint Bassion, the igumen of the monastery, that the eunuch Babylos was a woman. It was also revealed to Acacius, igumen of the nearby Abraham monastery. Saint Bassion summoned Saint Matrona and asked in a threatening voice why she had entered the monastery: to corrupt the monks, or to shame the monastery.

With tears the saint told the igumen about all her past life, about her husband, hostile to her efforts and prayers, and about the vision directing her to go to the men's monastery. Convinced that her intent was pure and chaste, Saint Bassion sent Saint Matrona to a women's monastery in the city of Emesa. In this monastery the saint dwelt for many years, inspiring the sisters by her high monastic achievement. When the Abbess died, by the unanimous wish of the nuns the Nun Matrona became head of the convent.

The fame of her virtuous activities, and miraculous gift of healing, which she acquired from the Lord, spread far beyond the walls of the monastery. Dometian also heard about the deeds of the nun. When Saint Matrona learned that her husband was coming to the monastery and wanted to see her, she secretly went off to Jerusalem, and then to Mount Sinai, and from there to Beirut, where she settled in an abandoned pagan temple. The local inhabitants learned of her seclusion, and began to come to her. The holy ascetic turned many from their pagan impiety and converted them to Christ.

Women and girls began to settle by the dwelling of the nun and soon a new monastery was formed. Having fulfilled the will of God, revealed to her in a dream, the saint left Beirut and journeyed to Constantinople where she learned that her husband had died. With the blessing of her spiritual Father, Saint Bassion, the ascetic founded a women's monastery in Constantinople, to which sisters from the Beirut convent she founded also transferred. The Constantinople monastery of Saint Matrona was known for its strict monastic rule and the virtuous life of its sisters.

In extreme old age Saint Matrona had a vision of the heavenly Paradise and the place prepared for her there after 75 years of monastic labor. At the age of one hundred, Saint Matrona blessed the sisters, and quietly fell asleep in the Lord.