

Date: November 26, 2024

Subject: BURL-Choir Martyrs Platon and Romanus Weekend NOTICE

Dorogiye!

This Saturday/Sunday, the Church commemorates the Martyr Platon of Ancyra, and the Martyr Romanus, Deacon of Caesarea.

The attached Tropar / Kondak text sheet contains the special prayers that will be sung.

Early next week, on Sunday / Monday, the Church will commemorate the repose of Saint Philaret (Drozdov), Metropolitan of Moscow.

Brief summaries about Martyrs Platon and Romanus, and Saint Philaret are provided below.

(Note: unless otherwise indicated, all dates are “old style”.)

**** MARTYR PLATON OF ANCYRA

The Holy Martyr Platon, brother of the holy Martyr Antiochus the Physician (July 16), was born at the city of Ancyra in Galatia. While still a youth he left home and went through the cities, preaching the Word of God to pagans, amazing his audience with the persuasiveness and beauty of his speech, and his profound knowledge of Greek learning.

Because of his preaching he was arrested and brought for trial to the temple of Zeus before the governor Agrippinus. At first, the judge attempted to persuade the saint to turn away from Christ by flattery. He assured the youth that he might be on a par of intellect with the greatest of the philosophers Plato, if only he worshipped also the pagan gods. To this Saint Platon answered, that the wisdom of the philosopher, although great, was but ephemeral and limited, whereas the true, eternal and unbounded wisdom comprised the Gospel teachings. Then the judge promised to give him his beautiful niece for his wife if he would deny Christ. He also threatened him with torture and death if he refused. Saint Platon replied that he chose a temporal death for the sake of eternal life. The patience of the governor was exhausted, and he gave orders to mercilessly beat the martyr, and then send him off to prison.

When they led Saint Platon off to prison, he turned to the people gathered about the temple, and he called on them not to forsake the Christian Faith. Seven days later they again led the Martyr Platon for trial before Agrippinus in the temple of Zeus, where they had the implements of torture already prepared: boiling cauldrons, red-hot iron and sharp hooks. The judge offered the martyr a choice: either to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods, or to feel the effects of these implements of torture on his body. Again the saint steadfastly refused to worship idols, and after his tortures they threw him in prison for eighteen more days without bread or water. But seeing that this did not shake the martyr, they offered him his life and freedom if he would only say, “Great is the god Apollo.” The martyr refused to deny Christ or to sacrifice to the idols. Therefore, Agrippinus ordered the holy Martyr Platon to be beheaded.

**** MARTYR ROMANUS THE DEACON OF CAESAREA

Information concerning Saint Romanus is found in Books 3 and 12 of the Church History of Eusebius. Saint Romanus was born in Palestine, and served as a deacon in Caesarea. At the time of the persecution against Christians, he was living in Antioch. Through his preaching, he encouraged the faithful to stand firm in their confession of Christ when the Eparch Asclypiades wanted to raze the church to its foundations. Saint Romanus told the people that they must fight to prevent the destruction of the house of God, assuring them that even if they died in their efforts they would sing a hymn of victory in heaven.

At that time there a festival was being celebrated in honor of the idols, and Saint Romanus went to the pagan temple to upbraid the Eparch and the unbelievers for their impiety. As Asclypiades was about to enter the temple, Saint Romanus fearlessly proclaimed that the idols were not gods, and that only Jesus Christ was truly God.

Asclypiades ordered the saint to be beaten, and even tried to persuade him to deny Christ. When this failed, the Eparch ordered that Saint Romanus be tortured. He was suspended and beaten, and his sides were scraped with metal blades. Bravely enduring these torments, Saint Romanus confessed Christ, and chastised Asclypiades for his obstinate refusal to see the truth.

Then Saint Romanus was condemned to death by fire. As soon as the fire was lit, however, a rain fell and put it out. Then the Eparch ordered the saint's tongue to be cut out, because he still confessed Christ and reviled the idolaters. Even after his tongue was cut out, the saint continued to speak as before.

Finally, Saint Romanus was nailed to a keg, and he was strangled in his prison cell. Having completed his contest for Christ, he was found worthy of the heavenly Kingdom, where he continuously glorifies the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit throughout all ages.

**** REPOSE OF SAINT PHILARET (DROZDOV), METROPOLITAN OF MOSCOW

Saint Philaret (DrozdoV) was born on December 26, 1782 in Kolomna, a suburb of Moscow, and was named Basil in Baptism. His father was a deacon (who later became a priest).

The young Basil studied at the Kolomna seminary, where courses were taught in Latin. He was small in stature, and far from robust, but his talents set him apart from his classmates.

In 1808, while he was a student at the Moscow Theological Academy at Holy Trinity Lavra, Basil received monastic tonsure and was named Philaret after Saint Philaret the Merciful (December 1). Not long after this, he was ordained a deacon.

In 1809, he went to teach at the Theological Academy in Petersburg, which had been reopened only a short time before. Hierodeacon Philaret felt ill at ease in Petersburg, but he was a very good teacher who tried to make theology intelligible to all. Therefore, he worked to have classes taught in Russian rather than in Latin.

Philaret was consecrated as bishop in 1817, and was appointed to serve as a vicar in the diocese of Petersburg. He soon rose to the rank of archbishop, serving in Tver, Yaroslavl, and Moscow. In 1826, he was made Metropolitan of Moscow, and remained in that position until his death.

The Metropolitan believed that it was his duty to educate and enlighten his flock about the Church's teachings and traditions. Therefore, he preached and wrote about how to live a Christian life, basing his words on the wisdom of the Holy Fathers. His 1823 CATECHISM has been an influential book in Russia and in other countries for nearly two hundred years.

The reforms of Tsar Peter the Great had abolished the patriarchate and severely restricted the Church, placing many aspects of its life under governmental control. Metropolitan Philaret tried to regain some of the Church's freedom to administer its own affairs, regarding Church and State as two separate entities working in harmony. Not everyone shared his views, and he certainly made his share of enemies. Still, he did achieve some degree of success in effecting changes.

One day, Archimandrite Anthony (Medvedev), a disciple of Saint Seraphim of Sarov (January 2), paid a call on his diocesan hierarch. During their conversation, Father Anthony spoke of the patristic teaching on unceasing

prayer, and he may have told the Metropolitan something of Saint Seraphim. Saint Philaret felt a deep spiritual kinship with Father Anthony, who soon became his Elder. He made no important decision concerning diocesan affairs, or his own spiritual life, without consulting Father Anthony. Saint Seraphim once told Father Anthony that he would become the igumen of a great monastery, and gave him advice on how to conduct himself. It was Saint Philaret who appointed him as igumen of Holy Trinity Lavra.

Metropolitan Philaret wanted to have the Holy Scriptures translated into modern Russian, so that people could read and understand them. Father Anthony, however, criticized the unorthodox ethos of the Russian Bible Society, which was popular during the reign of Alexander I. In his eagerness to have the Bible translated into modern Russian, Saint Philaret at first supported the Bible Society without realizing how dangerous some of its ideas were. The first Russian translation of the Bible was printed during the reign of Tsar Alexander II.

Under the direction of his Elder, Metropolitan Philaret made great progress in the spiritual life. He also received the gifts of unceasing prayer, clairvoyance, and healing. It is no exaggeration to suggest that Saint Philaret himself was one of the forces behind the spiritual revival in nineteenth century Russia. He defended the Elders of Optina Monastery when they were misunderstood and attacked by many. He protected the nuns of Saint Seraphim's Diveyevo Convent, and supported the publication of patristic texts by Optina Monastery.

Metropolitan Philaret was asked to dedicate the new Triumphal Gate in Moscow, and Tsar Nicholas I was also present. Seeing statues of pagan gods on the Gate, the Metropolitan refused to bless it. The Tsar became angry, and many people criticized the saint's refusal to participate. He felt that he had followed his conscience in this matter, but still felt disturbed by it, and so he prayed until he finally dropped off to sleep. He was awakened around 5 A.M. by the sound of someone opening the door which he usually kept locked. The Metropolitan sat up and saw Saint Sergius of Radonezh (September 25) leaning over his bed. "Don't worry," he said, "it will all pass." Then he disappeared.

Two months before his death, Saint Philaret saw his father in a dream, warning him about the 19th day of the month. On November 19, 1867, he served the Divine Liturgy for the last time. At two in the afternoon, they went to his cell and found his body. He was buried at Holy Trinity Lavra.

Saint Philaret was glorified by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1995.