

July 14

Nerses di Lambron (1152/1153-1198) pastor and ecumenical witness

At around this time, the Armenian Church commemorates Nerses of Lambron, archbishop of Tarsus.

Baptized Smbat, he was consecrated to monastic life by his parents when he was a child. At the age of sixteen he was entrusted to the care of his great-uncle Nerses Snorhali, who was a catholicos of the Armenian Church. Nerses was ordained a priest and went to the Black Mountain to learn about monastic tradition. In 1175, when he was still very young, he was ordained bishop by the new catholicos Grigor Tlay.

Nerses found himself drawn into discussions regarding the possibility of union between the Armenian and Greek churches, which had been separate entities from the time of the Council of Chalcedon onwards. He wrote eloquent texts in the hope of convincing his church to be open to dialogue and to reform its ways. Named archbishop of Tarsus in 1180, he remained faithful to his monastic calling even as he became immersed in activity, his intelligence fully engaged in the pastoral ministry to which he had been summoned.

His openness to dialogue and his passion for Church unity, in the name of the primacy of love, cost him years of insults and humiliation. Yet he never backed away from his intentions, even when he found his path barred by a refusal on the part of the Greek clergy of Constantinople, who ignored his appeals despite Nerses's deeply felt respect and admiration for the Byzantine church.

Nerses died on July 14, 1198, and is a doctor of the Armenian Church.

BIBLICAL READINGS

1 Cor 12:4-11; Mt 7:6-12

Camillo of Lellis (1550-1614) priest

Camillo de Lellis, the founder of the Ministers of the Sick, died in 1614.

Camillo was born in 1550 near Chieti, Tuscany, into a noble family. Following in his father's footsteps, he enrolled first in the Venetian and then in the Spanish army, and led a wildly dissolute life. In 1582 he was wounded and hospitalized. Shocked by the appalling treatment given the wounded, he decided to devote his life to creating a company of men who would serve the ill for God's love alone, and not for money. In 1586 Pope Sixtus V approved the creation of the new religious order.

In 1593, Camillo finally accepted ordination to the priesthood. Because of strife within his Congregation, he was forced to give up the post of general minister, but he continued to serve the ill lovingly until the end of his life.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Tob 12:6-13; Lk 10:25-37

Nicodemus of Mt. Athos (1749-1809) monk

Nicodemus of Mt. Athos, a monk who edited the most important anthologies of patristic spiritual writings in the Christian East, died in 1809.

Nicola Kalliboutzes, as he was baptized, was born in 1749 on the Greek island of Naxos. At the age of twenty-six he went to Mt. Athos and joined the monastery of Dionysiou, beginning a monastic journey in which he integrated the hesychast tradition with the study and publication of the works of the Church fathers.

A man of prayer gifted with an unusual memory and a genuine openness to the Christian wisdom of both the East and the West, Nicodemus gave the hesychast tradition, which is centered on the practice of the Jesus prayer, a solid biblical and patristic foundation. He also made the message of the Church fathers living and vital for his contemporaries by publishing works that are still essential references for every Orthodox Christian. The most famous of these is the Philokalia, which Nicodemus edited at the request of Macarius of Corinth.

What made all of this possible was Nicodemus' personal experience of God in solitude and prayer, and his enthusiastic inquiry into the Christian traditions of the past, which led him to discover Western traditions such as Ignatius of Loyola's Spiritual Exercises. Nicodemus took these traditions and transformed them into authentic, living messages that helped revitalize the entire Church community.

He spent much of his life in small kelia (cells) on the Holy Mountain of Athos, which he found to be the ideal environment for his dual activity of study and prayer.

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:

John Keble (d. 1833), priest, Tractarian, poet

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

Camillo of Lellis, priest (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

Theodore (?), martyr (Spanish-Mozarabic calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (7 abib/hamle):

Shenuda the Great of Atripe (5th cent.), head of the hermits (Coptic Orthodox Church)

Linus (1st cent.), pope of Rome (Coptic Catholic Church)

Visit of the Trinity to Abraham (Ethiopian Church)

LUTHERANS:

Karolina Utraiainen (d. 1929), lay preacher in Finland

MARONITES:

Bonaventure (d. 1274), bishop

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Aquila (1st cent.), apostle, one of the 70