

# September 9

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The exact reconstruction of his historical existence is one of the most intricate puzzles of modern hagiography. What is certain is that Poemen was considered a bearer of such important teachings that over an eighth of the corpus of Sayings of the desert fathers are attributed to him.

According to apophthegmatic literature, Poemen was born around the year 350, lived in the monastic settlement of Scetis, which he had entered with six brothers, and came into contact with the greatest spiritual figures of his day.

He is remembered for his profound insights on the subject of spiritual discernment, which for him flows from intimate familiarity with one's own fragility and that of others. Only through humility and the ability to refrain from judging and comparing oneself to others, says Poemen, will we come to know what is possible to know about ourselves and our neighbors. This, in turn, will teach us mercy and loving identification with others, which alone guide our steps towards the God whom Jesus Christ revealed.

Abba Poemen's name also appears in several Byzantine and Oriental calendars, and Cardinal Baronio mentions him in the Roman Martyrology of 1573.

## BIBLICAL READINGS

1 Cor 3:4-23; 1 Pet 5:5-14; Acts 18:24-19:6; Lk 16:1-13

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## Albert Schweitzer

(1875-1965)

Lutheran pastor

In 1965 Albert Schweitzer, a Lutheran theologian and witness to the Gospel, died in Lambaréné, in the Gabon Republic. Born in 1875 in Kaysersberg, Alsatia, Schweitzer explored and developed each of his many talents. He became a well-known organist and interpreter of Bach. Then, as a Lutheran pastor and professor of New Testament at the University of Strasbourg, he published studies that became milestones in twentieth century biblical scholarship. Schweitzer cleared away many of the excesses that had cluttered the field of research on the historical Jesus, and made an important contribution to the study of Pauline exegesis and spirituality.

Convinced that he would find the true Jesus only by following in his footsteps, Schweitzer went on to obtain a degree in medicine. In 1913 he opened a hospital in the Gabon Republic. There he dedicated many years to the promotion of life, which for him was the only possible basis for a humanitarian ethic.

Schweitzer received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952. After the death of his wife in 1957, he returned to Lambaréné, and fought to the end to give life to his patients.

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## Alexander Men

(1935-1990)

priest and martyr

At dawn on September 9, 1990, as he was on his way to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in his parish, Alexander Men was attacked and killed by an axe-wielding assassin. Men was a priest of the Moscow Patriarchate and one of the leading figures of Russia's cultural and spiritual revival after the fall of the Soviet regime.

Alexander Men was born in 1935 into a family of Jewish ancestry. From his youth, his experience of being a Christian was fraught with difficulties. Baptized secretly, the young Alexander lost his license as a fur merchant in 1958 because of his involvement in intellectual Christian circles.

Men nonetheless went on to be ordained a priest in 1960, and acquired an extraordinary theological formation almost single-handedly, especially in the fields of biblical research and the history of religions. He kept up a vast network of secret contacts with Christian intellectuals scattered throughout the Moscow area, and carried out an active pastoral ministry in each of the parishes to which he was assigned. Everywhere he went, he became known as a teacher of prayer and of love for the Scriptures.

Despite repeated interrogations by the KGB, Men became the most visible exponent of the Russian Church's cultural renaissance at the end of the 1980s. He founded universities for lay people and schools of religious education that were open to the public. It may have been these initiatives, together with his Jewish ancestry, that led someone in authority to

put an end - after several warnings - to Men's tireless activity as announcer of the Gospel.

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#### THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

##### ANGLICANS:

*Charles Fuge Loyvder* (d. 1880), priest

##### COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (4 nasi/pàg-w-emén):

*Poemen*, monk (Coptic Orthodox Church)

##### LUTHERANS:

*Louis Pasquali* (d. 1560), witness to the point of bloodshed in Spain

##### MARONITES:

*Joachim and Anne*, parents of the virgin Mary; *Council of Chalcedon* (451)

##### ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

*Joachim and Anne*, holy and righteous ancestors of God

*Severian of Sebaste* (d. ca. 320), martyr

##### WEST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:

*Joachim and Anne*, parents of the Virgin