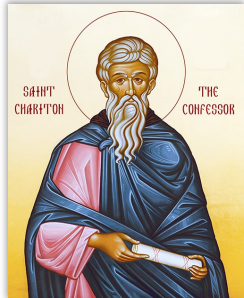


Our Venerable Father and Confessor Chariton

SAIN'T CHARITON THE CONFESSOR was born at Iconium in the province of Lycaonia, and suffered there during a persecution against Christians in the reign of Emperor Aurelian (270-275). The example of the holy Protomartyr Thekla (September 24), who was also a native of his city, encouraged him to confess Christ, since he had a great devotion to her.

St. Chariton (*pronounced "KA-ri-ton"*) bravely denounced the pagan gods and staunchly confessed faith in the one True God, Christ the Saviour. The holy Confessor underwent fierce tortures but, by God's Providence, he survived. The persecution ended after Aurelian's death in 275. Saint Chariton was among the many Christians who were released from prison, and he resolved to dedicate his entire life to the service of the Lord. Although he escaped death, he grieved because he had not received the crown of martyrdom.

After arriving at Jerusalem on a pilgrimage to the holy places, he fell into the hands of thieves. They tied him up and threw him in a cave, intending to kill him later. After they left to find people to rob, the saint prayed fervently to God expecting to be put to death. He did not ask God to deliver him, but instead he entreated Him to do with him as He wished.



At this time a snake crawled into the cave and began to drink wine from a vessel setting there. Later it vomited forth its deadly venom, poisoning the wine. When they returned to the cave, the evil men drank the poisoned wine and they all perished. Thus, their wicked lives came to a fitting end. Saint Chariton gave thanks to God, and then he gave away the gold which the malefactors had stolen, distributing it to the poor, to churches, and to monasteries. He began his ascetic struggles in the place of his miraculous rescue, and there he built a church. In time a monastery was established: the renowned Pharan Lavra in Palestine. Saint Chariton's fame drew many disciples to him. He governed them with paternal affection, and he elevated them to the highest degrees of virtue.

Saint Chariton compiled a strict Rule for his monastery. Yearning for solitude, the monk withdrew farther into the desert in order to avoid the praise of men, but he never rejected anyone who sought his spiritual guidance. He founded two more monasteries: the Jericho (called the Monastery of Saint Chariton) and the Souka, which was called "the old Lavra." He also brought many Jews and pagans to the Faith.

At the end of his life, Saint Chariton struggled in a cave atop a hill near the Souka monastery, but he did not cease to provide guidance for all three of the monasteries which he founded. He fell asleep in the Lord peacefully and at an advanced age on September 28, 350.

According to tradition, Saint Chariton compiled the Office of the Monastic Tonsure. Saint Chariton was buried at the Pharan monastery, in accordance with his last wishes. His grace-filled relics were enshrined in the church that had been built on the site of the robbers' cave.

Celebrating Our Deep Faith

Byzantine Catholic Worship: Our Church, Its Customs and Rich Heritage

Our Liturgical Year: September 6 Miracle of the Archangel Michael

THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL touched on the lives of countless Christians, among whom were included apostles and disciples of Christ, in miracles manifesting the power of God. One of these miracles, wherein St. Michael was invoked by a man whose only claim to fame was the fact that he was a Christian, occurred at a place called Colossae (Chonais) in Asia Minor and is celebrated on September 6. The divine manifestation was only one example of the miracles ascribed to St. Michael, but has been selected by Church Fathers for commemoration because it exemplified the power of the archangels.



Among the first of the new faith of Jesus Christ to pay tribute to the great Michael were the disciples St. John the Evangelist and the dedicated St. Philip, both of whom are credited with having introduced Christianity to many parts of Asia Minor. Following a successful mission in the areas of Phrygia, the two disciples preached in Ephesus and went on to Hierapolis, a city in which a huge venomous snake was worshiped by a spiritually deprived populace who paid no heed to either John or Philip until the snake died after the two missionaries invoked the power of the Lord to demonstrate the futility of snake worship.

As a result of this gallant action, Philip was crucified, and when the mob turned to John for more vengeance, a sudden earthquake rocked the city and the thoroughly frightened snake worshipers recoiled and decided to listen to John tell of Jesus Christ, after which they were converted in great numbers to Christianity. St. John remained in the area of Hierapolis and Colossae for several months, leaving with the prophecy that the community would soon be blessed with a miraculous well to which the ailing could go for cure. When the prophecy came true, the people unanimously dedicated the well to St. Michael the Archangel. St. John had so often told them he had the power of the Lord to work miracles.

Troparion, Tone 4:

O captain and leader of the armies of heaven, unworthy as we are, we beseech you without cease to surround us with your intercessions and cover us beneath the shelter of the wings of your ethereal glory. We bend our knee and cry out with perseverance, "Deliver us from danger, O Prince of the Powers on high!"

Divine Liturgy 101:

Forefeast: Anticipating and Preparing

BY NOW, most are aware of what an “afterfeast” or “post-feast” is — the period of time following certain major feasts of the Christian liturgical year during which the feast continues to be celebrated. For example, the feast of the Nativity of Our Most Holy Mother of God (September 8) has an afterfeast of four days, and the Exaltation of the Holy and Precious Life-giving Cross (September 14) has an afterfeast of seven days.

But did you know that there is also the existence of a “forefeast” as well? Also known as a “prefeast”, it is a period of time preceding certain major feasts during which the Church anticipates the approaching festival. The liturgical life of the Church reflects this anticipation by foreshadowing the feast in the divine services celebrated during the forefeast.

The period of a forefeast varies from 1 to 5 days, depending on the particular feast. Here is the list from the **Menaion** (the source book that contains the Propers of the Saints and of all Fixed Commemorations of the Mystery of our Salvation):

Nativity of the Theotokos (September 8) - forefeast: 1 day (September 7)

Exaltation of the Holy Cross (Sept. 14) - forefeast: 1 day (Sept. 13)

Presentation of the Theotokos (November 21) - forefeast: 1 day (Nov. 20)

Nativity of Christ (December 25) - forefeast: 5 days (December 20 - 24)

Theophany (January 6) - forefeast: 4 days (January 2 - January 5)

Presentation of Christ (February 2) - forefeast: 1 day (February 1)

Annunciation (March 25) - forefeast: 1 day (March 24)

Transfiguration of Our Lord (August 6) - forefeast: 1 day (August 5)

Dormition of the Mother of God (August 15) - forefeast: 1 day (August 14).

The feasts of **Palm Sunday, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost**, however, do not have forefeasts, but, with the exception of Palm Sunday, have afterfeasts/post-feasts.

Troparion of the Preparation of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (sung in Tone 2)

We offer You, O Lord, as a means of intercession, the life-giving Cross, a sign of Your bounty You have given us in spite of our unworthiness. Save our country and Your people who offer You their supplications through Your Mother, O You Who alone are the Lover of Mankind!

* * * * *

September: Harvest, Thanksgiving, and Sowing

THE FIRST DAY OF SEPTEMBER is celebrated as the Ecclesiastical or Church New Year by Eastern Christians. It is also a day marked by prayers for the environment, reminding us to be good stewards of the world around us.

By marking the start of a new year in September, the Church was associating the new year with harvesting crops. As preparations for winter were being made, so too were preparations for the upcoming calendar year. For Christians, it was a time of thanksgiving, remembering the good weather and abundant rain the Lord provided for that year’s harvest — something we pray for at every Divine Liturgy.



Furthermore, by marking the new year at harvest time, we remind ourselves annually of our dependence on both hard work and the blessings of God. Going beyond material blessings and healthy crops, this applied (as do many of our hymns) to Imperial concerns, including prayers for protection from our enemies:

Troparion, Tone 2:

Fashioner of all creation, you fixed times and seasons by Your own authority; bless the crown of the year, O Lord, with Your goodness, preserving our nation and Your city in peace; and save us through the prayers of the Mother of God.

Kontakion, Tone 2:

You dwell on high, O Christ the King, Creator and Builder of all that is seen and unseen. You made the seasons and time and the day and night. Now bless the crown of the present year. Guard and protect our country, this city and Your people, O Lord, so rich in mercy.

And if one considers the increasing natural disasters, droughts, floods, wildfires, hurricanes, and famines, we should be all the more mindful in this modern era of technology and abundance to pray for such things — not less so.

We have not engineered our way out of dependence on God. If anything, the more our abilities increase, the more we have shown need for God’s favour and mercy.

In September, when we mark the beginning of the New Church Year, we say goodbye to the old and welcome the new. We give thanks for what the Lord has done, and petition His lovingkindness and protection for the days yet to come. We take a moment to consider our impact on the world around us, and whether our actions proceed from hearts of selfishness or hearts of compassion.

*Another year is dawning; Dear Father, help us through
In working or in waiting, another year with You;
Another year of progress, another year of praise,
Another year of proving Your presence all the days.*