

20,000 Martyrs Con't

Domna began to help the poor: she gave away her valuables with the assistance of Indes, and she also distributed food from the imperial kitchen. The chief eunuch, who was in charge of provisions for the imperial household, found out that Domna and Indes were not eating the food sent them from the emperor's table. He had them beaten in order to find out why they did not partake of the food, but they remained silent. Another eunuch informed him that the saints were distributing all the emperor's gifts to the poor. He locked them up in prison to exhaust them with hunger, but they received support from an angel and did not suffer. Saint Domna feigned insanity so she wouldn't have to live among the pagans. Then she and Indes managed to leave the court, and she went to a women's monastery. Abbess Agatha quickly dressed her in men's clothing, cut her hair and sent her off from the monastery.

During this time the emperor returned from battle and ordered that a search be made for the former pagan priestess Domna. The soldiers sent for this purpose found the monastery and destroyed it. The sisters were thrown into prison, subjected to torture and abuse, but not one of them suffered defilement. Sent to a house of iniquity, Saint Theophila was able to preserve her virginity with the help of an angel of the Lord. The angel led her from the brothel and brought her to the cathedral.

At this time the emperor cleared the city square to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. When they began sprinkling the crowd with the blood of the sacrificial animals, Christians started to leave the square. Seeing this, the emperor became enraged, but in the middle of his rantings a great thunderstorm sprang up. People fled in panic, and the emperor had to retreat to the palace for his own safety.

Later Maximian went to the church with soldiers and told them they could escape punishment if they renounced Christ. Otherwise, he promised to burn the church and those in it. The Christian presbyter Glycerius told him that Christians would never renounce their faith, even under the threat of torture. Hiding his anger, the emperor exited the church, and a short time later commanded the presbyter Glycerius be arrested for trial. The executioners tortured the martyr, who did not

cease to pray and to call on the Name of the Lord. Unable to force Saint Glycerius stop confessing Christ, Maximian ordered him to be burned to death.

On the Feast of the Nativity of Christ in the year 302, when about 20,000 Christians had assembled at the cathedral in Nicomedia, the emperor sent a herald into the church. He told the Christians that soldiers were surrounding the building, and that anyone who wished to leave had to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. Anyone who defied the emperor would perish when the soldiers set fire to the church. All those present refused to worship the idols.

As the pagans prepared to set fire to the church, Bishop Anthimus, baptized all the catechumens and communed everyone with the Holy Mysteries. All 20,000 of those praying died in the fire. Among them were the abbess Agatha and Saint Theophila who had been saved from the den of iniquity by a miracle. Bishop Anthimus, however, managed to escape the fire.

Maximian thought that he had exterminated all the Christians of Nicomedia. He soon learned that there were many more, and that they would confess their faith and were prepared to die for Christ. The emperor wondered how to deal with them. At his command they arrested the regimental commander Zeno, who was openly criticizing the emperor for his impiety and cruelty. Zeno was fiercely beaten and finally beheaded. They jailed the eunuch Indes, formerly a priest of the idols, for refusing to participate in a pagan festival.

The persecution against Christians continued. Dorotheus, Mardonius, Migdonius the deacon and others were thrown into prison. Bishop Anthimus encouraged them by sending letters to them. One of the messengers, the Deacon Theophilus, was captured. They subjected him to torture, trying to learn where the bishop was hiding. The holy martyr endured everything, while revealing nothing. Then they executed him and also those whom the bishop had addressed in his letter. Though they were executed in different ways, they all showed the same courage and received their crowns from God.

For weeks, Saint Domna concealed herself within a cave and sustained herself by eating plants. When she returned to the city, she wept for a long time at the ruins of the church, regretting that *Con't Pg 10*

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she was not found worthy to die with the others. That night she went to the sea shore. At that moment fishermen pulled the bodies of the martyrs Indes, Gorgonius and Peter from the water in their nets.

Saint Domna was still dressed in men's clothing, and she helped the fishermen to draw in their nets. They left her the bodies of the martyrs. With reverence she looked after the holy relics and wept over them, especially over the body of her spiritual friend, the Martyr Indes.

After giving them an honorable burial, she did not depart from these graves so dear to her heart. Each day she burned incense before them, sprinkling them with fragrant oils. When the emperor was told of an unknown youth who offered incense at the graves of executed Christians, he gave orders to behead the youth. The Martyr Euthymius was also executed along with Domna.

Galatians 1:11-19 (Epistle, Sunday After)

But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Matthew 2:13-23 (Gospel, Sunday After)

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

CHRIST IS BORN!

GLORIFY HIM!

Christos Razdajetsja!

Slavite Jeho!