



## SAINT BARBARA

Holy Great Martyr Barbara lived and suffered during the reign of the emperor Maximian (305-311). Her father, the pagan Dioscorus, was a rich and illustrious man in the Syrian city of Heliopolis. After the death of his wife, he devoted himself to his only daughter.

Seeing Barbara's extraordinary beauty, Dioscorus decided to hide her from the eyes of strangers. Therefore, he built a tower for Barbara, where only her pagan teachers were allowed to see her. From the tower there was a view of hills stretching into the distance. By day, she was able to gaze upon the wooded hills, the swiftly flowing rivers, and the meadows covered with a mottled blanket of flowers; by night the harmonious and majestic vault of the heavens twinkled and provided a spectacle of inexpressible beauty. Soon the virgin began to ask herself questions about the First Cause and Creator of so harmonious and splendid a world.

Gradually, she became convinced that the soulless idols were merely the work of human hands. Although her father and teachers offered them worship, she realized that the idols could not have made the surrounding world. The desire to know the true God so consumed her soul that Barbara decided to devote all her life to this goal, and to spend her life in virginity.

The fame of her beauty spread throughout the city, and many sought her hand in marriage. But despite the entreaties of her father, she refused all of them. Barbara warned her father that his persistence might end tragically and separate them forever. Dioscorus decided that the temperament of his daughter had been affected by her life of seclusion. He therefore permitted her to leave the tower and gave her full freedom in her choice of friends and acquaintances. Thus Barbara met young Christian maidens in the city, and they taught her about the Creator of the world, about the Trinity, and about the Divine Logos. Through the Providence of God, a priest arrived in Heliopolis from

Alexandria disguised as a merchant. After instructing her in the mysteries of the Christian Faith, he baptized Barbara, then returned to his own country.

During this time, a luxurious bathhouse was being built at the house of Dioscorus. By his orders, the workers prepared to put two windows on the south side. But Barbara, taking advantage of her father's absence, asked them to make a third window, thereby forming a Trinity of light. On one of the walls of the bath-house Barbara traced a cross with her finger. The cross was deeply etched into the marble, as if by an iron instrument. Later, her footprints were imprinted on the stone steps of the bathhouse. The water of the bathhouse had great healing power. Saint Simeon Metaphrastes (November 9) compared the bathhouse to the stream of Jordan and the Pool of Siloam, because by God's power, many miracles took place there.

When Dioscorus returned and expressed dissatisfaction about the change in his building plans, his daughter told him about how she had come to know the Triune God, about the saving power of the Son of God, and about the futility of worshipping idols. Dioscorus went into a rage, grabbed a sword and was on the point of striking her with it. The holy virgin fled from her father, and he rushed after her in pursuit. His way became blocked by a hill, which opened up and concealed the Saint in a crevice. On the other side of the crevice was an entrance leading upwards. Saint Barbara managed then to conceal herself in a cave on the opposite slope of the hill.

After a long and fruitless search for his daughter, Dioscorus saw two shepherds on the hill. One of them showed him the cave where the Saint had hidden. Dioscorus beat his daughter terribly, and then placed her under guard and tried to wear her down with hunger. Finally he handed her over to the prefect of the city, named Martianus. They beat Saint Barbara fiercely: they struck her with rawhide, and rubbed her wounds with a hair cloth to increase her pain. By night, Saint Barbara prayed fervently to her Heavenly Bridegroom, and the Savior Himself appeared and healed her wounds. Then they subjected the Saint to new, and even more frightful torments.

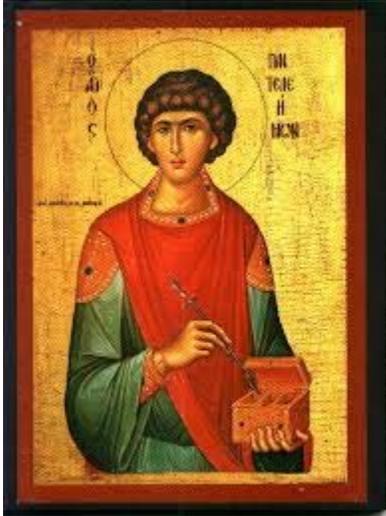
In the crowd where the martyr was tortured was the virtuous Christian woman Juliana, an inhabitant of Heliopolis. Her heart was filled with sympathy for the voluntary martyrdom of the beautiful and illustrious maiden. Juliana also wanted to suffer for Christ. She began to denounce the torturers in a loud voice, and they seized her.

Both martyrs were tortured for a long time. Their bodies were raked and wounded with hooks, and then they were led naked through the city amidst derision and jeers. Through the prayers of Saint Barbara, the Lord sent an angel who covered the nakedness of the holy martyrs with a splendid robe. Then the steadfast confessors of Christ, Saints Barbara and Juliana, were beheaded. Dioscorus himself executed Saint Barbara. The wrath of God was not slow to punish both torturers, Martianus and Dioscorus. They were killed after being struck by lightning.

In the sixth century the relics of the holy Great Martyr Barbara were transferred to Constantinople. Six hundred years later, they were transferred to Kiev (July 11) by

Barbara, the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor Alexius Comnenos, who married the Russian prince Michael Izyaslavich. They rest even now at Kiev's St Vladimir cathedral, where an Akathist to the Saint is served each Tuesday.

Many pious Orthodox Christians are in the habit of chanting the troparion of Saint Barbara each day, recalling the Savior's promise to her that those who remembered her and her sufferings would be preserved from a sudden, unexpected death, and would not depart this life without benefit of the Holy Mysteries of Christ. Saint Barbara is commemorated on December 4.



## SAINT PANTELEIMON

The Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon was born in the city of Nicomedia into the family of the illustrious pagan Eustorgius, and he was named Panteleimon. His mother Saint Euboula (March 30) was a Christian. She wanted to raise her son in the Christian Faith, but she died when the future martyr was just a young child. His father sent Panteleimon to a pagan school, after which the young man studied medicine at Nicomedia under the renowned physician Euphrosynus. Panteleimon came to the attention of the emperor Maximian (284-305), who wished to appoint him as royal physician when he finished his schooling.

The hieromartyrs Hermolaus, Hermippus and Hermocrates, survivors of the massacre of 20,000 Christians in 303 (December 28), were living secretly in Nicomedia at that time. Saint Hermolaus saw Panteleimon time and again when he came to the house where they were hiding. Once, the priest invited the youth to the house and spoke about the Christian Faith. After this Panteleimon visited Saint Hermolaus every day.

One day the Saint found a dead child on the street. He had been bitten by a great snake, which was still beside the child's body. Panteleimon began to pray to the Lord Jesus Christ to revive the dead child and to destroy the venomous reptile. He firmly resolved that if his prayer were fulfilled, he would become a follower of Christ and receive Baptism. The child rose up alive, and the snake died before Panteleimon's eyes.

After this miracle, Panteleimon was baptized by Saint Hermolaus with the name Panteleimon (meaning "all-merciful"). Speaking with Eustorgius, Saint Panteleimon prepared him to accept Christianity. When the father saw how his son healed a blind man by invoking Jesus Christ, he then believed in Christ and was baptized by Saint Hermolaus together with the man whose sight was restored.

After the death of his father, Saint Panteleimon dedicated his life to the suffering, the sick, the unfortunate and the needy. He treated all those who turned to him without charge, healing them in the name of Jesus Christ. He visited those held captive in prison. These were usually Christians, and he healed them of their wounds. In a short time, reports of the charitable physician spread throughout the city. Forsaking the other doctors, the inhabitants began to turn only to Saint Panteleimon.

The envious doctors told the emperor that Saint Panteleimon was healing Christian prisoners. Maximian urged the Saint to refute the charge by offering sacrifice to idols. Saint Panteleimon confessed himself a Christian, and suggested that a sick person, for whom the doctors held out no hope, should be brought before the emperor. Then the doctors could invoke their gods, and Panteleimon would pray to his God to heal the man. A man paralyzed for many years was brought in, and pagan priests who knew the art of medicine invoked their gods without success. Then, before the very eyes of the emperor, the Saint healed the paralytic by calling on the name of Jesus Christ. The ferocious Maximian executed the healed man, and gave Saint Panteleimon over to fierce torture.

The Lord appeared to the Saint and strengthened him before his sufferings. They suspended the Great Martyr Panteleimon from a tree and scraped him with iron hooks, burned him with fire and then stretched him on the rack, threw him into a cauldron of boiling tar, and cast him into the sea with a stone around his neck. Throughout these tortures the martyr remained unhurt, and denounced the emperor.

At this time the priests Hermolaus, Hermippus and Hermocrates were brought before the court of the pagans. All three confessed their faith in the Savior and were beheaded (July 26).

By order of the emperor they brought the Great Martyr Panteleimon to the circus to be devoured by wild beasts. The animals, however, came up to him and licked his feet. The spectators began to shout, "Great is the God of the Christians!" The enraged Maximian ordered the soldiers to stab with the sword anyone who glorified Christ, and to cut off the head of the Great Martyr Panteleimon.

They led the saint to the place of execution and tied him to an olive tree. While the martyr prayed, one of the soldiers struck him with a sword, but the sword became soft like wax and inflicted no wound. The Saint completed his prayer, and a Voice was heard from Heaven, calling the passion-bearer by his new name and summoning him to the heavenly Kingdom.

Hearing the Voice, the soldiers fell down on their knees before the holy martyr and begged forgiveness. They refused to continue with the execution, but Saint Panteleimon told them to fulfill the emperor's command, because otherwise they would have no share with him in the future life. The soldiers tearfully took their leave of the Saint with a kiss.

When the Saint was beheaded, the olive tree to which the Saint was tied became covered with fruit. Many who were present at the execution believed in Christ. The Saint's body was thrown into a fire, but remained unharmed, and was buried by Christians. Saint Panteleimon's servants Laurence, Bassos and Probus witnessed his execution and heard the Voice from Heaven. They recorded the life, the sufferings and death of the Saint.

Portions of the holy relics of the Great Martyr Panteleimon were distributed throughout all the Christian world. His venerable head is now located at the Russian monastery of Saint Panteleimon on Mt. Athos.

The veneration of the holy martyr in the Russian Orthodox Church was already known in the twelfth century. Prince Izyaslav (in Baptism, Panteleimon), the son of Saint Mstislav the Great, had an image of Saint Panteleimon on his helmet. Through the intercession of the saint he remained alive during a battle in the year 1151. On the Feast of the Great Martyr Panteleimon, Russian forces won two naval victories over the Swedes (in 1714 near Hanhauze and in 1720 near Grenham).

Saint Panteleimon is venerated in the Orthodox Church as a mighty saint, and the protector of soldiers. This aspect of his veneration is derived from his first name Panteleimon, which means "a lion in everything". His second name, Panteleimon, given him at Baptism, which means "all-merciful", is manifest in the veneration of the martyr as a healer. The connection between these two aspects of the Saint is readily apparent in that soldiers, receiving wounds more frequently than others, are more in need of a physician-healer. Christians waging spiritual warfare also have recourse to this Saint, asking him to heal their spiritual wounds.

The holy Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon is invoked in the Mystery of Anointing the Sick, at the Blessing of Water, and in the Prayers for the Sick.

The Feast of the holy Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon is the patronal Feast of the Russian monastery on Athos. The forefeast starts eight days before the Feast. Each day after Vespers, Moliebens are sung with Canons in each of the eight tones. Thus, each day has its own particular Canon. The second day of the Feast is the monastery feastday. On this day a general Panikhida is served after Vespers in memory of the founders and benefactors of the monastery, and kollyva (kutia: wheat or rice boiled with honey) is blessed and distributed.



## ST. KYRIKOS AND ST. JULITTA

The Holy Martyrs Julitta and Kyrikos lived in the city of Iconium in the province of Lykaoneia in Asia Minor. Saint Julitta was descended from an illustrious family and was a Christian. Widowed early on, she raised her three-year old-son Kyrikos (Quiricus). During the time of the persecution against Christians initiated by the emperor Diocletian (284-305 AD), Saint Julitta with her son and two trustworthy servants departed the city, leaving behind her home, property, and servants.

Concealing her noble rank, she hid out first at Seleucia, and then at Tarsus. There around the year 305 AD she was recognized, arrested and brought to trial before Governor Alexander. Strengthened by the Lord, she fearlessly answered the judge's questions, and she firmly confessed her faith in Christ. The Governor gave orders to beat the Saint with rods. During her torments, Saint Julitta kept repeating, "I am a Christian, and will not offer sacrifice to demons".

The little boy Kyrikos cried, seeing his mother being tortured, and wanted to go to her. Governor Alexander tried to sit him on his lap, but the boy broke free and shouted, "Let me go to my mother, I am a Christian". The Governor flung the boy from the high tribunal and kicked him down the stone steps. The boy struck his head on the sharp edges and died. The mother, seeing her lacerated son, gave thanks to God that He had permitted her child to be perfected before her, and to receive the unfading crown of martyrdom. After many cruel tortures, they beheaded Saint Julitta with a sword.

The relics of Saints Kyrikos and Julitta were uncovered during the reign of Saint Constantine the Great (commemorated. May 21). In honor of these holy martyrs a monastery was built near Constantinople, and not far from Jerusalem a church was built. In popular custom, Saints Kyrikos and Julitta are prayed to for family happiness, and the restoring of sick children to health.