

Earthly Refuge and Heavenly Refuge

This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.



On the first day of Great Lent this year, March 7th, the Church remembers Saint Basil of Cherson. He was one of seven bishops in the fourth century who governed Cherson, located on the Crimean Peninsula in the Black Sea.

Many of Cherson's people were hostile to the Christian faith, and all but one of the seven bishops would be martyred. Yet they, and many missionaries, were willing to go there and to work at spreading the Gospel. Basil's own companion, Ephraim, had been persecuted and finally beheaded, but that didn't keep Basil from going among the people and converting many. For this he was arrested, flogged and ordered to leave the city.

Basil took refuge in a mountain cave, and begged God to let him return to Cherson to carry on his work. Soon, the son of a wealthy citizen died, and the grieving parents were shown in a vision that Basil could bring him back to life. They found Basil, who told them that he had no power to perform miracles. He taught them about the God of the Christians, and encouraged them to believe in the only One who can do anything. When he was convinced that their faith was real, he prayed fervently, and the boy's life was restored.

So Basil did return to Cherson, honored by many, and continued his missionary efforts. But in the following years the feeling against Christians intensified. Basil was dragged out of his home and beaten to death in the same streets he had once strolled along, talking with people about Jesus Christ.

On March 10th we remember a third-century saint, Quadratus of Corinth, whose life began in a mountain refuge. His mother had hidden there to escape another persecution of Christians. She died soon after Quadratus' birth, and his early years were spent in the wilderness.

Quadratus was taken into the care of kind Christians, who taught him the faith and saw to his education. He became a proficient healer, using the herbs and plants he knew well from childhood, always with prayer and giving glory to God. When people and their sorrows felt overwhelming, he would briefly take refuge again in the wild places he had loved as a young boy.

Quadratus attracted followers, and when he was arrested as an outspoken Christian, his friends stood by him. They shared his persecution and martyrdom, and so we have a long list of saints who died with him in Corinth. Among them are many women, some remembered by name on this day: Chariessa, Nunechia, Basilissa, Nike, Galia, Galina, and Theodora.

Troparion - Tone 1

Let the godly-minded Quadratus, Anectus, Paul, Dionysius, Cyprian, and Crescens
Be praised with melodious hymns,
For as the six-fold choir of Christ's prize-winners,
They ceaselessly pray for us before the Trinity!

Though Saint Basil and Saint Quadratus both took earthly refuge from trouble, they faced trouble when it came, finding the only real refuge in their Lord. They followed the teaching of Christ recorded in Saint Matthew and read on Forgiveness Sunday: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break in and steal...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (6:19-20).