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1. Great Martyr Demetrius of Thessalonica (+ 306)

One of the most popular Saints of the Church, born in Thessalonica. He belonged to one of the most distinguished families of the province of Macedonia and was widely admired not only for his noble ancestry and grace of bearing but also for a virtue, wisdom and goodness of heart surpassing that of his elders. Both his father and mother were secret Christians. Demetrius was baptized in a secret church in his father's home, and raised in the Christian Faith.

By the time Demetrius had reached maturity and his father had died, the Caesar of the East Roman Empire Galerius Maximian, had ascended the Throne (305). Demetrius' military expertise and abilities, as well as his administrative talents and education, led Maximian to appoint him Commander of the Roman forces in Thessaly and Proconsul of Greece. The chief tasks expected

of this young commander consisted in the defence of the famous city from the barbarians and the eradication of Christianity. In regard to Christians, the will of the Caesar was expressed simply. "Put to death anyone who calls on the name of Christ."

Maximian did not suspect that in appointing him he had opened up a way for him to bring many to Christ, because - instead of persecuting and executing Christians - he openly began to teach the Christian Faith to the inhabitants of the city and to overthrow pagan customs and idolatry. His words convinced them because they saw in the righteousness, peace and love that marked his life an illustration of the truth of which he spoke.

Maximian had just won a series of brilliant victories over the Scythians and was on his way back, when he halted in Thessalonica to receive the acclamations of the populace and to offer sacrifices to the idols. When he learned that the newly-appointed Proconsul was a Christian and that he had converted many Roman subjects to Christianity, his rage knew no bounds. Demetrius was summoned and confined in an insalubrious cell, located in the basement of nearby baths.

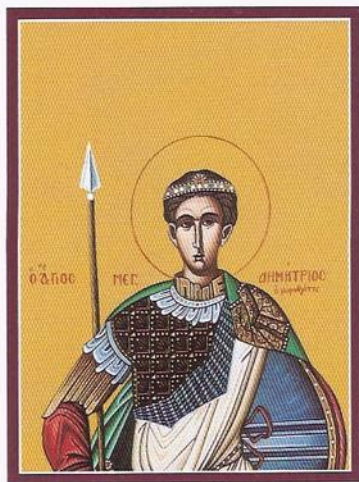
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St. Cedd Bishop of Lastingham, England (+ 664)

St. Demetrius of Basarabov, Bulgaria (13th c.)

A Bulgarian by origin, he was born in the village of Basarabov, near the Danube. He became a monk in a monastery of the area, and then pursued asceticism in the wilderness. He reposed in peace as a wonder-worker.

In the 17th c. his body was found **incorrupt** on the banks of the River Lomos. During the Russian-Turkish War of 1769-1774, the Russian General P. Saltikov took the body to bring it to Russia, but finally he entrusted it to the Romanian Orthodox Church. Today it is to be found in the Patriarchal Cathedral of Sts. Constantine and Helen in Bucharest. ▶



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As was usual on those occasions, Maximian arranged for games and gladiatorial combats to take place in the amphitheatre of the city. He had brought with him a man of gigantic stature and Herculean strength called Lyaius, a Scythian by origin. Such was this man's strength and skill in single combat that no one could withstand him, so he challenged Christians to wrestle with him on a platform built over the upturned spears of the victorious soldiers. At that time a brave young Christian named Nestor went to the prison to his advisor Demetrius and requested a blessing to fight the barbarian. And with his blessing and prayers, he prevailed over the fierce Scythian and hurled him from the platform onto the spears of the soldiers, just as the murderous pagan would have done with the Christians,

saying "God of Demetrius help me."

Rather than yield to this sign of the sovereign power of God, Maximian flew into a rage and ordered the immediate arrest of Nestor and his beheading and sent guards to the prison to kill the one who had blessed this deed, St. Demetrius. On October 26, 306, soldiers appeared in the Saint's underground prison and ran him through with lances.

St. Demetrius' body was at first thrown at first into a well, but later it was secretly buried in the place of his martyrdom. It was God's will that the grace with which He filled him should remain active even after his martyrdom. This is why He caused to flow a healing myron with a delightful scent from his martyric body. So he is called "the Myrrh-gusher."

During the reign of **St. Constantine the Great** (306-337), a Church was built over his grave. A century later, during the construction of a majestic new Basilica on the old spot, the **incorrupt** Relics of the Holy Martyr were uncovered. Several times, those venerating the Holy Wonderworker made attempts to transfer his Holy Relics, or part of them, to Constantinople but invariably he made it clear that he would not permit anyone to remove even a portion of his Relics. His Relics were stolen by Boniface Monferaticus, in 1204, and transferred to Italy, where they were discovered in the Roman Catholic Abbey of St. Lorenzo in Campo and returned to Thessalonica in 1978.

St. Theophilus of Kiev Caves, Bishop of Novgorod (+ 1482)

Monk Martyr Joasaph the New (+ 1536)

He was a monk and a disciple of **St. Niphon, Patriarch of Constantinople** (comm.11 Aug.), whom he accompanied to Mt. Athos, after Niphon's return from Romania. He asked his spiritual father to bless him to offer himself for martyrdom, and after his death he freely presented himself at the Islamic court and before them all professed the Christian Faith. He was beheaded after tortures.