October 31

Rueiss (ca. 1334-1404) witness

Today the Coptic Church remembers Rueiss, a vagabond for God and fool-for-Christ.
Born around the year 1334 in a village of the Nile delta into a family of poor farmers, Furayg spent his childhood working the land with his parents, assisted by a small camel he called Rueiss, "Little Head."
When fierce persecution against Christians broke out, Furayg's father denied the faith. The boy ran away from home, took the nickname he had given his camel, and wandered from one end of Egypt to another, living in total poverty. As a way of escaping the respect he earned everywhere on account of his holiness, Rueiss feigned madness, asked to be called Tegi or "the Fool," and began to wander the streets naked, refusing to speak even when he was beaten and humiliated.
A deeply prayerful man and "contemplative of God," as the Coptic liturgy calls him, Rueiss died on the twenty-first day of Babah of the year 1404, which corresponds to October 18 in the Julian calendar. He was buried in the chapel of St. Mercury in the neighborhood of Cairo called Dayr al-Handaq. The chapel was restored in 1937, and near it were built the Coptic Institute of Higher Studies, the new Coptic Patriarchate, and the new cathedral of Cairo. The complex is called Anba Rueiss in memory of Egypt's beloved fool-for-Christ.
The inclusion of Rueiss's name in the Eucharistic prayer of the Coptic liturgy testifies to this saint's importance in the popular devotion of the Church.

Martin Luther, witness **and the Protestant Reformation** (16th cent.)

Martin Luther was born in 1483 in Eisleben, Saxony, and was educated at the cathedral school of Magdeburg and the University of Erfurt. He joined the Augustinian Order, was ordained a priest in 1507, and became a lecturer at the University of Wittenberg.
Elected provincial superior of his Order, Luther was responsible for supervising a dozen Augustinian communities, and as he noted the deviations from the Gospel that were evident in most aspects of the life of the Church of his time, he became increasingly uneasy. Disgusted in particular by the deplorable commerce in indulgences, Luther gradually began to announce the teaching he saw as central to Christian faith: the justification of believers by faith, not by works.
Finding support for his ideas in the theology of the Pauline letters and in the thought of Augustine, Luther publicly contested certain deviations that had become common ecclesial practice by hanging a list of ninety-five theses on the door of the church of Wittenberg in 1517.
In previous centuries, other reformers had fought to save the heart of the Gospel, at times paying for their insistence with their lives. But it was Luther who initiated the Protestant Reformation. On that thirty-first day of October of 1517, he certainly could not have imagined that within a few years' time his initiative would have resulted in the creation of eccesial communities separate from the Church of Rome. Yet one event led to another, and there was soon a permanent schism between Catholics and Protestants, which was progressively defined on the basis of different understandings of the fundamental tenets of faith. Only in the twentieth century were steps taken to begin to heal the division.
The Reformation spread rapidly throughout much of Europe. Martin Luther died in 1546, after having profoundly influenced the renewal of both the Catholic and the Protestant churches. In a critical moment in history, he safeguarded the primacy of faith and of the Word contained in Scripture against all teachings that are the fruit of human religious inquiry alone.

Louis Massignon (1883-1962) witness

On October 31, 1962 Louis Massignon, a Christian scholar of the Arab world and a witness to the mercy announced in the Gospel, returned to the God of Abraham and Father of Jesus Christ.
Massignon was born in Nogent-sur-Marne in 1883, and as a student he was fascinated by Eastern cultures and the three monotheistic religions. He received his diploma in Arabic and went to Morocco, where he discovered Muslim faith and hospitality.
As had happened for Charles de Foucauld - of whom Massignon became a friend, and in part a disciple - Massignon's own encounter with Islam and the cultures of the Arab world led him back to his Christian faith. From that moment he was inhabited by an inner fire that guided him for the rest of his life.
He became a professor of Islamic studies and introduced the world to the riches of Muslim mysticism, becoming the greatest scholar of Al-Hallaj in his day. In Paris, his lectures attracted crowds of people, who were fascinated by Massignon's ability to convey to his listeners his genuine openness to the thought of other cultures.
Convinced that the peoples of North Africa and the Middle East were almost completely misunderstood in Europe, Massignon worked to make their thinking better known to Westerners, and promoted Gandhian non-violence as a means

of resolving the grave crises in the colonial territories.
Sensitive, profoundly charitable and astonishingly humble, Massignon always managed to unite a limitless sense of compassion to his scientific spirit.
He is remembered with deep respect and gratitude in the Muslim world as well as in the West.

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER....

ANGLICANS:
Martin Luther (d. 1546), reformer

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
Claude, Lupercus and Victoricus of Léon (3rd-4th cent.), martyrs (Spanish-Mozarabic calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (21 babah/teqemt):
Joel (5th-4th cent. BCE), prophet (Coptic Church)
Anba Rueiss, vagabond of God (Coptic Orthodox Church)

LUTHERANS:
Commemoration of the Reformation

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Stachys, Apelles, Amplias, Urban, Narcissus and Aristobulus (1st cent.), of the seventy disciples
Epimachus (d. 250), martyr
Peter of Cetigne (d. 1830), metropolitan of Montenegro (Serbian Church)