

November 12

John the Merciful (6th-7th cent.) pastor

After the Council of Chalcedon of 451, whose reception was especially problematic in Egypt, two patriarchates were created in Alexandria. One was Coptic, and the other was Melkite and faithful to the Byzantine emperor.

Despite the tensions and divisions in the Church, there was one Melkite patriarch of Alexandria who was respected and loved even by the Copts: John the Merciful, who lived from the sixth to the seventh century and is even commemorated in the ancient Coptic calendar of Abu'l-Barakat.

John was the son of the Byzantine governor in Cyprus, and was born in the city of Amathous, on the island's southern coast. When his wife and children died, he dedicated himself completely to the poor. This occupation, in which he continued to engage for the rest of his life, earned him the nickname "the Merciful."

After John was elected Melkite patriarch of Alexandria in 610, he found himself drawn into political dilemmas such as the Persian advance and the demands made upon Egypt by the Byzantine empire. Throughout all of this, John defended the specific task of the Church against the interference of secular powers.

His principal pastoral commitment was assisting the needy, and he managed to direct a large part of the Church's resources to benefit the last in society, involving the wealthy classes in his charitable initiatives.

John died in Cyprus around the year 619. His illustrious biographers (John Mosco, Sophronius the Sophist, and Leonzis of Neapolis in the East; Anastasius the Librarian and Jacob of Varazze in the West) made him known and loved in all of the Christian churches.

BIBLICAL READINGS

2 Cor 9:6-11; Mt 5:14-19

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

Josaphat (d. 1623), bishop and martyr (Roman and Ambrosian calendar)

Theodore the Studite (d. 826), abbot (Monastic calendar)

Emilianus of Cocullatus (d. 574), abbot (Spanish-Mozarabic calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (3 hatur/hedar):

Ciriacus of Corinth (4th cent.), monk (Coptic Church)

Madhanina Ezi (13th-14th cent.), monk (Ethiopian Church)

LUTHERANS:

Christian Gottlob Barth (d. 1862), preacher of the missions in Württemberg

MARONITES:

Theodore the Studite

Martin (d. ca. 655), pope

John the Merciful, bishop

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

John the Merciful, archbishop of Alexandria

Nilus the Ascetic (5th cent.), monk

Stephen Uros II Milutin (d. 1321), king of the Serbians (Serbian Church)