

St Charalambos the Wonder-Worker

St Charalambos was a priest in the city of Magnesia, near Smyrna in Asia Minor. About 198 AD, Sevirus, the Emperor of the Roman Empire had appointed Loucius to govern Asia Minor. Many Christians were persecuted under his reign. At this time Charalambos was in Magnesia and openly taught the Christian religion.

When Loucius discovered this, he captured Charalambos for trial. Asked why he condemned the idols and disobeyed the laws of the Empire, Charalambos informed Loucius that he adhered to the laws of Jesus Christ and no others. He maintained that Christ offered eternal life to his followers. The governor commanded Charalambos to sacrifice to the gods and forsake Christ, or else undergo fierce tortures. The Saint refused to deny his beliefs.

St Charalambos was stripped of his clothing and his body was ripped with iron claws. He withstood the torture with courage. One of the dukes became enraged that he took the iron claw and began to rip Charalambos' flesh with more fervour than his soldiers. At this point the first miracle occurred. The Duke's hands became paralysed. Screaming, he asked Loucius to help him. Seeing the Duke's plight, the governor spat in the Saint's face. Immediately the pagan's head twisted in an awkward position, where it remained. The onlookers were terrified and begged the Saint to pray to Christ to save them. Charalambos beckoned them to pray and ask forgiveness for their sins. The Duke pleaded with Charalambos to pray to Christ to recover the use of his hands. When the Saint finished praying, the Duke's hands were healed. He was then baptised and became a devout Christian.

After these events, many people from Magnesia and other parts of Asia came to Charalambos, confessed their sins and



were baptised. The Saint performed many miracles by curing the faithful of many illnesses. When Sevirus heard of this he was greatly angered and sent soldiers to Magnesia to find the Saint, drive nails into his back, and then drag him from Magnesia to Antioch. The soldiers found Charalambos and carried out the order. They tied a rope to his beard and dragged him behind a horse, but a voice told them to leave this man alone for God was with him. Frightened, they took Charalambos to Antioch without further torture.

Sevirus, informed of what had happened, sent another group of soldiers to torture the Saint. They tied a skewer to his chest and gathered wood so that they could burn him. He was turned on the skewer with the fire burning him for several hours. Through Divine Help the Saint was not hurt. Sevirus ordered that the Saint be brought before him. He asked the Saint what his age was and was told that he was 113 years old.

A young man had died in the city and

Sevirus ordered the Saint to resurrect him to show the strength of his God. After praying several hours, God, through Charalambos, performed the miracle. Many pagans converted to Christianity when they saw this, however, an eparch named Crispos asked Sevirus to execute the Saint because he had performed this miracle through the use of magic. Sevirus asked Charalambos to sacrifice to the gods to save himself but he refused, therefore, Sevirus ordered his soldiers to hit the Saint's jaws with rocks and burn his face and beard with torches. The fire reflected off the Saint's face and burned the bystanders. Sevirus was amazed at this time and was curious to know who Christ was. Crispos said to him that a harlot named Mary had borne Him. A man named Aristarchos warned Crispos not to blaspheme. A fit of madness overcame Sevirus and as he shot arrows towards the sky, he ordered Christ to come and fight him. Suddenly, the earth quaked and a fierce storm arose. Sevirus and Crispos begged the Saint to save them. Sevirus' daughter Galinee, came into the room and warned her father to believe in Christ. She asked the Saint to forgive her father and to pray to God to end this calamity. The Saint prayed and the acts of God stopped.

After 30 days, Sevirus again told Charalambos to sacrifice to the gods, but Charalambos refused. He then ordered that a bridle be placed in the Saint's mouth and that he be taken throughout the city in the same manner as a horse. Galinee begged her father to stop these tortures or else he would be condemned to eternal damnation. Sevirus was angered by his daughter's words and ordered her to sacrifice to the gods. In the Temple of Zeus she told the priests that she cursed the gods, then she prayed to the true God. The statues of all the gods were destroyed. Sevirus ordered more statues to be made and placed in the temple so the people would not mock the gods. Once again, Galinee went to the temple, prayed to God and the statues were destroyed.

To insult Charalambos, he was driven to a widow to be guarded. When he arrived at her home, he leaned against a dry wooden beam. This beam was transformed into a tree. The woman was so frightened that she asked the Saint to leave her home since it was not worthy of his presence. He told her to have faith in God and she would have nothing to fear. The next day the neighbours saw the tree in her garden and upon asking, they learned of the miracle. They sat with the Saint and discovered Christianity. The pagans told Sevirus about these happenings and the eparch advised Sevirus to have Charalambos beheaded. The Saint was captured, but before his execution, he prayed to Christ. He died in peace before the soldiers could behead him. Galinee took his body and placed it in a golden coffin.

St Charalambos guarded his people much as a shepherd would guard his flock, therefore, he is considered to be the protector of shepherds and their flocks. The body of St Charalambos is now in the Monastery of Saint Stephen in the Meteora, Greece, where it performs miracles to this day.

Dismissal Hymn

O wise Charalambos, you were proven an unshakable pillar of the Church of Christ; an ever-shining lamp of the universe. You shone in the world by your martyrdom. You delivered us from the moonless night of idolatry O blessed one. Wherefore, boldly intercede to Christ that we may be saved.

Kontakion

O Priest-martyr, athlete, champion Charalambos, your relics are a priceless treasure of the Church. Wherefore she rejoices, glorifying the Creator.

*from Voice in the Wilderness
newsletter of the Greek Orthodox
Archdiocese of Australia
Parish of St George, South Brisbane*



No bones about it

Human sacrifice? Archaeologists on Crete unearthed the bones of a young woman who they believe could have been 'sacrificed' to the gods in order to prevent an imminent disaster.

The remains were discovered during excavations at the palace complex of Kydonia - the ancient name of the modern town of Chania.

Experts believe the woman lived in the 14-13th century BC, by which time the Mycenaeans had replaced the Minoans as the dominant culture on the island

Article from ATHENS NEWS

Soft drinks increase cancer risk

PEOPLE who drink at least two soft drinks a week nearly double their risk of developing pancreatic cancer, a study has revealed.

Researchers collected data on the consumption of soft drinks, juice and other dietary items, as well as lifestyle and environmental factors of 60,524 people who were part of the huge Singapore Chinese Health Study, following up with study participants for up to 14 years.

The research found there was a 87 per cent higher risk of developing pancreatic cancer for those who drank two or more soft drinks per week. No link was found between drinking fruit juice and developing pancreatic cancer, said the study which was published in Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention said.

"The high levels of sugar in soft drinks may be increasing the level of insulin in the body, which we think contributes to pancreatic cancer cell growth," lead researcher Mark Pereira of the University of Minnesota said.

Insulin helps the body

metabolise sugar, and is produced in the pancreas.

Pancreatic cancer is one of the most deadly forms of cancer, and only 5 per cent of people who are diagnosed are known to survive five years later, according to the American Cancer Society.

Doctor Pereira says the findings would apply to western countries as well.

"Singapore is a wealthy country with excellent health-care. Favourite pastimes are eating and shopping, so the findings should apply to other western countries," he said. He said that while sugar may be to blame, those who drink sugar-sweetened soft drinks often have other poor health habits.

The Singapore Chinese Health Study enrolled Singapore Chinese people who lived in government housing estates - as nearly nine in 10 people in Singapore do - and looked at their diets, physical activity, reproductive history, occupational exposure and medical history.

Article from Courier Mail

