

February 14

Cirrus, monk, and **John** (d. ca. 303) martyrs

Today the Coptic Church commemorates the monk Cirrus and his brother John, who were martyred during the reign of Diocletian together with the three virgins Theodora, Theodossia, and Theopista, and their mother Athanasia.

According to ancient hagiographers, John was a soldier, and Cirrus was a doctor who had left the medical practice to enter a monastery. They were both natives of Alexandria, but lived near Antioch.

When persecution broke out under Diocletian, they returned to Alexandria, where they encouraged Athanasia and her three daughters to remain steadfast in confessing their faith.

Around the year 303 tensions increased, and there were mass arrests. Cirrus, John, and the four women were sentenced to death, tortured, and decapitated on the same day. Their bodies were first taken to St. Mark's Church in Alexandria, and then transferred to the outskirts of the great African metropolis Menouthis. Their tomb there became one of the most popular sanctuaries in the early Church. The Alexandrian neighborhood where their tomb had been located is still called Abukir, after the name of Cirrus, who has always been venerated as a great healer because of the reputation he earned during his lifetime as a doctor of the poor.

The relics of Cirrus and John are held in Rome, where there are several churches dedicated to the two Egyptian martyrs.

A READING

They now rest in this sepulcher. Nobly they faced martyrdom for Christ's name, and for him they laid down their lives. Their relics were deposited together in one place, and because we could not distinguish one body from the other, we decided to take both and transfer them to the church of the Holy Evangelists, where we gave them a tomb as befits martyrs. In the future, if God is willing, we will continue to come together to honor both the holy Evangelists and the blessed martyrs, whose names are Cirrus and John.

From the *Homelies* of Cyril of Alexandria

BIBLICAL READINGS

Heb 12:3-14; 1 Pet 4:12-19; Acts 7:44-8:1; Lk 11:53-12:12

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:

Cyril (d. 869) and *Methodius* (d. 885), missionaries to the Slaves

Valentine (d. ca. 269), martyr at Rome

ARMENIANS:

Purification of the virgin Mary

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

Cyril, monk, and *Methodius*, bishop (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

Valentine, presbyter and martyr (Spanish Mozarabic calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (6 amsir/yakkatit):

Cyrus and *John*, martyrs (Chiesa copto-ortodossa)

Mary the sinner, who anointed the Lord at Bethany (Ethiopian Church)

LUTHERANS:

Cyril and *Methodius*, missionaries in Bohemia

Johann Daniel Falk (d. 1826), pedagogue in Saxony

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Auxentius of Mount Oxeia (d. 470), presbyter

Maron (d. ca. 410), hermit (Melkite Church)

EAST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:

Mark, apostle and evangelist (Malabar Church)

OLD CATHOLICS:

Cyril, monk, and *Methodius*, bishop, missionaries