February 10

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Scholastica (ca. 480-ca. 547) nun

Today the Eastern and Western churches commemorate Scholastica, the sister of Benedict of Norcia.
She is a figure shrouded in mystery. We know no more about her that what Benedict's biographer, Gregory the Great, wrote in the second book of his Dialogues.
Scholastica was consecrated to religious life from her childhood, and every year she went to visit her brother Benedict at Montecassino. In one of the most beautiful pages of the Dialogues, Gregory describes their last meeting. At sunset, Benedict wanted to return to his own monastery as his Rule prescribed, but Scholastica, who sensed that she was nearing the end of her life, asked God to allow her to spend the entire night in conversation and prayer with Benedict.
Legend has it that a sudden storm granted Scholastica's prayer. Gregory comments that her request prevailed over Benedict's reluctance because Scholastica had shown greater love than her brother.
Scholastica reminds us all that above and beyond the laws and rules we create for ourselves to help us walk in the Lord's footsteps, sincere and ardent love are what allow us, more than anything else, to find God's will for our lives.

Paul of Thebes (ca. 228-ca. 341) monk

Today the Coptic Church commemorates Paul of Thebes, the first Christian hermit.
The most reliable information about him is found in his Life, written by Jerome, who sought to discredit the many legends and reconstruct as accurate a portrait of the Egyptian hermit as was possible at the time.
Born around the year 228 into a wealthy Christian family, Paul received an excellent education. Confronted with the hostility of his brother-in-law, who threatened to hand him over to the authorities during the persecutions against Christians, Paul fled to the Lower Thebaid, and decided to turn his escape into a radical and voluntary choice of life. He found a cave hidden among a maze of rocks, where there was a small but constant spring, and stayed there until his death. Tradition claims that a crow provided him daily with the ration of bread he needed in order to survive, as a sign that this way of life was God's will for him.
There is absolute silence on the subject of the ninety years Paul spent in the cave, as if to suggest that a Christian hermit's experience of God in solitude is something that cannot be expressed in words. In this respect, Jerome contrasts Paul with Antony, a solitary who became a guide for other ascetics and who took part in the social and cultural events of his time.
At the end of his life, Paul received a visit from Antony, and when Paul died, Antony buried him in the grave that had been dug for him by two lions. The lions are often depicted next to Paul and his visitor in traditional iconography.
A community of anchorites, totally dedicated to seeking God in solitude, still lives at the site of Paul's cave today.

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:
Scholastica, sister of Benedict, abbess of Plombarola

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
Scholastica, virgin (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (2 amsir/yakkatit):
Paul of Thebe, the first hermit

LUTHERANS:
Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (d. 1782), theologian in Württemberg

MARONITES:
Apollonia (d. 249), martyr; Dorothea (IV cent.), vergin and martyr

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Charalampus the Thaumaturge (d. 202), hieromartyr