

December 4

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John Damascene (ca. 657-749) Church father and monk

Today the Eastern and Western churches commemorate John Damascene, a monk and Church father. He was born in Damascus in the second half of the seventh century into a family of Arab Christians, and was named Mansur at birth. Following in his father's footsteps, he entered the service of the caliph Omayyad of Damascus, and worked for many years as the caliph's administrator for the Christian population in the new capital of the Arab empire.

Around the year 700, Muslim policies toward Christians became harsher, and Mansur was forced to leave his job. He turned this unexpected adversity into an opportunity for radical obedience to his vocation, and after giving all of his belongings to the poor, he entered the Lavra of St. Sava near Jerusalem. There he took the name John and began to lead a life of intensive study and prayer.

At the request of the patriarch of Jerusalem, John became a preacher at the Holy Sepulcher. During the iconoclastic debates, he was one of the principal defenders of the cult of images. The central affirmations of the Second Nicene Council (787), which brought the iconoclastic era to a close by founding the validity of the cult of images on the Incarnation of the Word of God, are largely inspired by John Damascene's teachings.

His trilogy, entitled *The Source of Knowledge*, is the first work of systematic theology in the Greek patristic tradition.

John died in 749 and is buried at the Lavra of St. Sava.

PRAYER

Lord God,
grant that your Church may continue to find sustenance
in the teachings of the masters of wisdom and truth
you have raised up in every age,
and grant that the true faith John Damascene taught
with his writings and his life
may be our strength and our light.
Through Christ our Lord.

BIBLICAL READINGS

2 Tim 1:13-14; 2:1-3; Lk 6:43-45

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:

John Damascene, monk, teacher of the faith

Nicholas Ferrar (d. 1637), deacon, founder of the community of Little Gidding

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

John Damascene, priest and doctor of the church (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (25 hatur/hedar):

Mercury (Abu-Saifain; 3rd-4th cent.), martyr

LUTHERANS:

Barbara (3rd-4th cent.), martyr in Asia Minor

MARONITES:

Barbara of Eliopolis, martyr

John Damascene, monk

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Barbara, megalomartyr

John Damascene, hieromonk

WEST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:

Barbara of Eliopolis and *Juliana of Nicomedia* (d. ca. 304), martyrs

EAST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:

Barbara of Eliopolis, martyr (Caldean Church)

OLD CATHOLICS:

Barbara, virgine and martyr