January 27

Nino (ca. 276-ca. 340) witness

Today the Georgian Church commemorates Nino, an early evangelizer of the Republic of Georgia.
Nino was born in Cappadocia around the year 276, into a wealthy, noble Greek-speaking family. When she was twelve years old, her parents took her to Jerusalem. Abandoned by her father, who left the family to become a monk in the desert of Judah, she stayed in the Holy City for several years with her mother.
According to the Lives written several centuries after her death, Nino traveled to Georgia in search of Jesus' tunic, which was thought to have been taken there. It is more likely that she was deported there with other women during the persecution of Diocletian or Maximian.
In Mtskheta, the capital of the kingdom of Iberia, Nino began to preach widely and to spread the Gospel of Christ. She was well received by the royal family and led the two rulers to Christian faith. For this reason she is honored as "equal to the apostles and enlightener of Georgia."
Before her death, Nino also tried to evangelize the populations of the Caucasus and Kachezia. She died in the rural mountain village of Bobdé around the year 340.

BIBLICAL READINGS
1 Cor 4:6-16 or Gal 3:23-29; Mt 25:1-13 or Lk 7:36-50

Sava I of Serbia (1175-1235) pastor

On the same day Nino is commemorated by the Georgian church, the Serbian church remembers Sava, its first archbishop.
The son of the Serbian *zhupan* (patriarchal ruler) Stephen Nemanya, Rastko went to Mount Athos in 1192, soon after his seventeenth birthday. Against his family's wishes, he became a monk at the Russian monastery of St. Panteleimon, taking the name of Sava. Several years later his father decided to join him, having in the meantime abdicated the throne.
By a concession of the emperor of Constantinople, Sava is considered to be the founder of the Serbian monastery Hilandar, and is the author of its *typikon*.
In 1204, the sack of Constantinople by the crusaders changed the entire cultural landscape in which the new Balkan churches were growing. Sava left Mount Athos and settled in Studenitsa, where he was named igumen of the local monastery. In 1219 he was consecrated Archbishop of the Serbs by the Patriarch of Constantinople Manuel, thus becoming the head of a new autocephalous church.
Settling in Zica, Sava worked to provide the Serbian Church with solid spiritual and canonical foundations. The cultural discoveries he had made during his travels in the Byzantine East allowed him to reform the liturgical life of his church and make other important contributions. Sava died on January 14, 1235 in Turnovo, then the Bulgarian capital. His mortal remains, transported to Serbia, were burned by the Turks at the end of the sixteenth century.

BIBLICAL READINGS
Heb 7:26-8:2; Jn 10:9-16

Angela Merici (ca. 1474-1540) witness

On this day in 1540 Angela Merici, founder of the Company of St. Ursula, died in Brescia, Italy.

Born in Desenzano on Lake Garda around the year 1474, Angela received a religious education from her father, but she lost both of her parents at a young age.
From early adolescence she felt drawn to an intense life of prayer and Christian love, but she did not feel that any of the monasteries of her time were the right place to live the style of life that attracted her. She also would have needed a large dowry in order to enter one of them.
She took a first step by joining the Franciscan Third Order. Later, at the age of about forty, she moved to Brescia, and her radiant evangelical presence attracted many people and exerted a profound spiritual influence on the city's residents.
The turning point in her vocational search came in 1530, when she began to live near the Church of Sant'Afra and founded an institute for women who wanted to live according to the model of the first Christian communities. Angela also worked to give girls access to an education, which was not normally available to them. She sought to instill the desire and discipline necessary for an intense life of prayer in those who wanted to practice evangelical charity.
By the time of her death, her fame had spread far beyond the region of Brescia. Yet a long battle was soon underway, as many groups claimed the rights to her mortal remains and her spiritual legacy.

BIBLICAL READINGS
1 Pet 4:7b-11; Mk 9:34-37

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
Angela Merici, virgin (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (tubah/terr):
James of Nisibis (d. 338), bishop (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:
Paavo Ruotsalainen (d. 1852), witness to the faith in Finland

MARONITES:
Paula of Rome (d. 404), hermit

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Removal of the relics of John Chrysostom (438)
Sava I, enlightener and first bishop of the Serbians (Serbian Church)
Nino, equal to the apostles and enlightener of Georgia (Georgian Church)

OLD CATHOLICS:
Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 389/390), bishop and doctor of the church