February 7

Neomartyrs and Confessors of Russia and Ukraine (20th cent.)

On January 25 (February 7 according to the Gregorian calendar) of the year 1918, Vladimir, Metropolitan of Kiev and Halyc, was killed by Bolshevic revolutionaries. Arrested at the Kiev Caves Monastery, he was given a perfunctory trial and condemned to death. He died blessing his executioners.
With his tragic end, it became clear that reconciliation between the ideologists of the October Revolution and the more radically evangelical wing of Russian Christians was no longer possible.
A new season of witness to the point of bloodshed had already begun for Russian Christians in 1905, when the priests Vladimir Troepolskij and Constantin Chitrov were assassinated by the first revolutionaries. In 1910 the archbishop Nicone, exarch of Georgia, was assassinated in Tbilisi. When the October Revolution began, the archpriest John Kocurov was killed. In 1918, 160 priests were martyred in the city of Voronez alone, including the archbishop Tikhon, who was hanged from the cathedral door.
The number of Christians martyred during the Soviet era was incalculable, and the total number of the regime's victims was staggering: almost twenty million people lost their lives, often after years of exile and torture. In the Church, bishops, priests and monks were the most frequent victims of intermittent waves of persecution, torture and execution.
But Christianity in Russia survived, showing, as at other times in history, that the blood of martyrs is a seed that bears much fruit. Today's commemoration, first celebrated by the Russian Church in exile, is now the shared patrimony of all Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox Christians.

A READING

O Lord,
grant your blessing,
so that we, your weak and sinful servants
exhausted in our journey,
each on his own life's pathway,
might sing your praise in spite of all,
in front of our brothers and sisters
who have turned against you.
To you, our God,
a vast song of praise and thanksgiving.
Hear our prayer, and grant
that Christians may be calm, without fear, and at peace in your will.
Forgive and bless us all,
the thieves and the Samaritans, the children,
those who fall along the way,
the priests who walk by without stopping.
All are our neighbors:
the murderers and the victims,
those who curse and those who are cursed,
those who fight against you brutally
and those who prostrate themselves before your love.
Gather us all to yourself,
holy and righteous Father.

Anonymous prayer recited during the Kruschevian persecutions

BIBLICAL READINGS
Heb 13:7-16; Lk 12:32-40

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
Perpetua and Felicita (d. ca. 203), martyrs (Ambrosian calendar)
Dorothea (4th cent.), virgin and martyr (Spanish-Mozarabic calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (29 tubah/terr):
Xenia of Milasa (5th cent.), nun (Coptic Church)
Gabra Nazrawi (14th-15th cent.), monk (Ethiopian Church)

LUTHERANS:
Adolf Stöcker (d. 1909), court preacher in Berlino

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Parthenios (4th cent.), bishop of Lampsakos
Luke of Mount Stirion (d. ca. 946), monk
Neomartyrs of Russia (Russian Church)
Gabriel Kikodze (d. 1896), bishop (Georgian Church)