July 23

Anthony of Kiev Caves Monastery (983-1073) and **Theodosius** (d. 1074) his disciple monks

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Today Christians of the Byzantine-Slavic tradition commemorate Anthony of Kiev Caves Monastery.
Born in Lubec in 983, in the Chernigov region north of Kiev, Anthony felt drawn to monastic life and made the traditional pilgrimage to Mt. Athos. There, at the monastery of Esphigmenou, he was initiated into monastic life and received the igumen's blessing to return and continue his monastic journey in his homeland.
Around the mid-eleventh century, Anthony returned to Kiev and chose as his dwelling a cave in the hills near the city. Following the example of the desert fathers, he lived as an ascetic, and many disciples were attracted by his lifestyle of prayer and penitence. They carved other cells and a large crypt out of the rock, creating the nucleus of what would become the well-known Kiev Caves Monastery.
For Anthony, however, the attraction of the eremitic life was irresistible. Leaving the newly formed community in the care of his disciple Theodosius, he fled to "a faraway cave," where he lived in total silence and prayer until his death in 1073.
Before Anthony, monastic life had existed in Russia, but it had been essentially a foreign import financed by the wealthy. With the founding of the Kiev Caves Monastery, monasticism became popular among ordinary Russians, and Anthony is thus considered the father of Russian monasticism.
Theodosius is remembered as a kind and merciful spiritual father. He organized the life of the monastery according to the rule of Theodore the Studite, and is thus considered the founder of cenobitic life in Russia.

BIBLICAL READINGS
Gal 5:22-6:2; Mt 4:25-5:12

Bridget of Sweden (1303-1373) religious

In 1373 Bridget of Sweden died in Rome.
A member of the Swedish aristocracy, a wife and mother of eight children, Bridget had a strong personality and was cultured, deeply religious and loving. She considered Scripture her most precious treasure and the best medicine for healing souls, and often meditated upon the mystery of Christ's passion. With her husband, she cared for the sick and helped those in need.
After a pilgrimage to Santiago of Compostela, the couple decided to embrace religious life. Several years later Bridget, inspired as well by her own mystical experiences, decided to create a new order where it would be possible to live in radical faithfulness to the Gospel. She took as her model the Order of Fontevraud, founded by Robert d'Arbrissel in 1100.
The Order of the Most Holy Savior, also known as the Brigittine Order, was a mixed order of men and women, but the majority of its members were women. They were particularly devoted to the Lord's Passion and to the compassion of Mary.
Brigitte spent the last years of her life in Rome, where she died in 1373. In 1999, Pope John Paul II proclaimed her a joint patron of Europe.

BIBLICAL READINGS
Tob 8:5-10; Mk 3:31-35

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:
Bridget of Sweden, abbess of Vadstena

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
Bridget, religious (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (16 abib/hamle):
John the Calabite «of the golden gospel» (5th cent.; Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:
Bridget of Sweden, mystic in Sweden

MARONITES:
Phocas of Sinope (d. ca. 101), martyr

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Removal of the relics of Phocas of Sinope, hieromartyr
Ezekiel (6th cent. BCE), prophet
Anthony of the Kiev Caves Monastery, father of all the Russian monks (d. 1073; Russian Church)

OLD CATHOLICS:
Bridget of Sweden, widow