



Saint Dionysius the Areopagite October 3rd

The Hieromartyr Dionysius the Areopagite, Bishop of Athens St Dionysius lived originally in the city of Athens. He was raised there and received a classical Greek education. He then went to Egypt, where he studied astronomy at the city of Heliopolis. It was in Heliopolis, along with his friend Apollophonos where he witnessed the solar eclipse that occurred at the moment of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ by Crucifixion. “Either the Creator of all the world now suffers, or this visible world is coming to an end,” Dionysius said. Upon his return to Athens from Egypt, he was chosen to be a member of the Areopagus Council (Athenian high court).

When the holy Apostle Paul preached at the place on the Hill of Ares (Acts 17:16-34), Dionysius accepted his salvific proclamation and became a Christian. For three years St Dionysius remained a companion of the holy Apostle Paul in preaching the Word of God. Later on, the Apostle Paul selected him as bishop of the city of Athens. And in the year 57 St Dionysius was present at the repose of the Most Holy Theotokos.

During the lifetime of the Mother of God, St Dionysius had journeyed from Athens to Jerusalem to meet Her. He wrote to his teacher the Apostle Paul: “I witness by God, that besides the very God Himself, there is nothing else filled with such divine power and grace. No one can fully comprehend what I saw. I confess before God: when I was with John, who shone among the Apostles like the sun in the sky, when I was brought before the countenance of the Most Holy Virgin, I experienced an inexpressible sensation. Before me gleamed a sort of divine radiance which transfixed my spirit. I perceived the fragrance of indescribable aromas and was filled with such delight that my very body became faint, and my spirit could hardly endure these signs and marks of eternal majesty and heavenly power. The grace from her overwhelmed my heart and shook my very spirit. If I did not have in mind your instruction, I should have mistaken Her for the very God. It is impossible to stand before greater blessedness than this which I beheld.”

After the death of the Apostle Paul, St Dionysius wanted to continue with his work, and therefore went off preaching in the West, accompanied by the Presbyter Rusticus and Deacon Eleutherius. They converted many to Christ at Rome, and then in Germany, and then in Spain. In Gaul, during a persecution against Christians by the pagan authorities, all three confessors were arrested and thrown into prison. By night St Dionysius celebrated the Divine Liturgy with angels of the Lord. In the morning the martyrs were beheaded. According to an old tradition, St Dionysius took up his head, proceeded with it to the church and fell down dead there. A pious woman named Catulla buried the relics of the saint.

Apolytikion of Dionysius the Areopagite in the Fourth Tone

Since thou hadst been instructed in uprightness thoroughly and wast vigilant in all things, thou wast clothed with a good conscience as befitteth one holy. Thou didst draw from the Chosen Vessel ineffable mysteries; and having kept the Faith, thou didst finish a like course, O Hieromartyr Dionysios. Intercede with Christ God that our souls be saved.

Kontakion of Dionysius the Areopagite in the Plagal of the Fourth Tone

In spirit, thou didst pass through Heaven's gates, instructed by the great Apostle who attained to the third Heaven's heights, and wast made rich in all knowledge of things beyond speech; and then thou, O Dionysios, didst illuminate them that slumbered in the darkness of their ignorance. Hence we all cry out: Rejoice, O universal Father.