



## St. Ephraim the New

May 5th

The holy New Martyr and wonderworker Ephraim was born in Greece on September 14, 1384. His father died when the saint was young, and his pious mother was left to care for seven children by herself. When Ephraim reached the age of fourteen, the all-good God directed his steps to a monastery on the mountain of Amoman near Nea Makri in Attica. The monastery was dedicated to the Annunciation and also to St Paraskeva. Here he took on his shoulders the Cross of Christ, which all His followers must bear (Matt. 16:24). Being enflamed with love for God, St Ephraim eagerly placed himself under the monastic discipline.

For nearly twenty-seven years he imitated the life of the great Fathers and ascetics of the desert. With divine zeal, he followed Christ and turned away from the attractions of this world. By the grace of God, he purified himself from soul-destroying passions and became an abode of the All-Holy Spirit. He was also found worthy to receive the grace of the priesthood, and served at the altar with great reverence and compunction. On September 14, 1425, the barbarous Turks launched an invasion by sea, destroying the monastery and looting the surrounding area. St Ephraim was one of the victims of their frenzied hatred. Many of the monks had been tortured and beheaded, but St Ephraim remained calm. This infuriated the Turks, so they imprisoned him in order to torture him and force him to deny Christ. They locked him in a small cell without food or water, and they beat him every day, hoping to convince him to become a Moslem. For several months, he endured horrible torments. When the Turks realized that the saint remained faithful to Christ, they decided to put him to death. On Tuesday May 5, 1426, they led him from his cell. They turned him upside down and tied him to a mulberry tree, then they beat him and mocked him. "Where is your God," they asked, "and why doesn't he help you?" The saint did not lose courage, but prayed, "O God, do not listen to the words of these men, but may Thy will be done as Thou hast ordained." The barbarians pulled the saint's beard and tortured him until his strength ebbed. His blood flowed, and his clothes were in tatters. His body was almost naked and covered with many wounds. Still the Hagarenes were not satisfied, but wished to torture him even more. One of them took a flaming stick and plunged it violently into the saint's navel. His screams were heart-rending, so great was his pain. The blood flowed from his stomach, but the Turks did not stop. They repeated the same painful torments many times. His body writhed, and all his limbs were convulsed. Soon, the saint grew too weak to speak, so he prayed silently asking God to forgive his sins. Blood and saliva ran from his mouth, and the ground was soaked with his blood. Then he lapsed into unconsciousness. Thinking that he had died, the Turks cut the ropes which bound him to the tree, and the saint's body fell to the ground. Their rage was still not diminished, so they continued to kick and beat him. After a while, the saint opened his eyes and prayed, "Lord, I give up my spirit to Thee." About nine o'clock in the morning, the martyr's soul was separated from his body.