Holy Martyrs and Confessors Gurias, Samonas and Abibus

On November 28th (the 15th, old style) the Church commemorates the holy martyrs and confessors Gurias, Samonas and Abibus.

At the end of the 3rd century A.D., there lived near the city of Edessa two righteous men, Gurias and Samonas, who not only led virtuous lives themselves, but helped convert many pagans to Christianity. At that time the Roman Emperors Diocletian and Maximian began to cruelly persecute all Christians. Saints Gurias and Samonas were also seized in Edessa and tortured. But the martyrs firmly confessed their faith in Christ and were thrown into a dank prison, where they spent three months in cruel suffering. Afterwards they were tortured once again and then beheaded. Their holy relics were buried with honor by the faithful.

A considerable number of years later, the iniquitous King Lycinias, having separated from Emperor Constantine the Great, initiated a new persecution of Christians in Nicomedia, to which the Christians of Edessa were also subjected. At that time there lived in Edessa, where formerly were martyred Saints Gurias and Samonas, a certain pious deacon by the name of Abibus, who by means of his coura-geous confession strengthened his fellow Christians in faith and converted pagans to Christianity. Saint Abibus was also subjected to cruel tortures, and afterwards burned at the stake. His honorable body was buried together with Saints Gurias and Samonas, since Saint Abibus was martyred on the very same day (although many years later). Many miracles were wrought by the relics of the holy martyrs, while one of these miracles has led them to be regarded as the patrons of virtuous and chaste marriages.

At one time Edessa was besieged by a barbaric people who had come from Persia. The Greek kings sent their troops to help Edessa, and these troops were stationed in Edessa for a long time, defending the city from the barbarians. Among the Greek troops there was a certain soldier, a Goth by origin. It so happened that he was quartered in the home of a certain pious widow, who had an only daughter, the beautiful Euphemia. The widow concealed her daughter from male eyes, but the Goth once saw Euphemia, was seized with passion for her, and began to demand that the widow give her daughter to him in marriage, although in his homeland he already had a wife and children, but he concealed this fact.

For a long time the widow resisted the demands of the Goth, but he threatened her with all manner of repressions if she did not give him her daughter. Finally the poor widow was forced to agree, and gave her daughter to the Goth in marriage. For a little while they all lived peacefully. Soon Euphemia conceived a child, but before the time came for her to give birth, the barbarians retreated from the city and the Greek troops prepared to return to their homeland. The Goth also began making preparations for his return, intending to take Euphemia along with him as his lawful wife.

The widow cried over her impending separation from her beloved daughter, and on the eve of departure she brought Euphemia and the Goth to the church that had been built in honor of Saints Gurias, Samonas and Abibus, and forced the Goth to swear on their relics that he would not harm Euphemia in any way, but would cherish and protect her. The shameless Goth swore such an oath fearlessly. Then the widow prayed to the holy martyrs and gave her daughter into their keeping.
When Euphemia and the Goth reached his homeland, he took off her rich clothes and attired her in
the rags of a slave, and threatened to take her life if she revealed to his wife her true situation.
Euphemia tearfully prayed in secret to the holy martyrs, and asked them to take care of her and
deliver her from her misfortune. The Goth brought Euphemia into his house as a prisoner, and gave
her to his wife as a slave. The Goth’s wife was very jealous of Euphemia because of her beauty, and
humiliated and tormented her in all possible ways. When the time came for Euphemia to give birth,
she bore a boy whose face was an identical copy of his father – the Goth. The Goth’s wife was livid
with fury and decided to poison the infant by pouring lethal poison into his mouth at a time when
Euphemia was away at work. Upon her return, Euphemia was overcome with sorrow over her dead
infant, but seeing the poison dribbling from his mouth, she guessed who was responsible for his
death. However, she did not say anything to anyone, but several days later, when she was ordered to
serve at the table during a guest reception, she secretly dipped into her mistress’ cup a strand of wool
with which she had previously wiped away the poison dribbling from her dead infant’s mouth. The
Goth’s wife drank the poisoned beverage and died that same night. Her relatives, suspecting
Euphemia of being guilty of the death, decided to bury Euphemia alive together with her mistress.
After opening up the deceased’s coffin, they forcibly put Euphemia in with the corpse, which was
emitting a most putrid odor and teeming with worms.

Finding herself in such horrendous circumstances, Euphemia turned to the Lord with fervent prayer,
asking Him to deliver her by the intercession of the holy martyrs Gurias, Samonas and Abibus.
Suddenly three shining men appeared before her, radiant as the sun, at whose appearance the putrid
odor was replaced by wonderful fragrance. These were the holy martyrs themselves, who promised
her quick deliverance. While listening to them, Euphemia fell into a sweet sleep, and was
miraculously and instantaneously transported to Edessa and placed upon the casket with the relics of
the holy martyrs. At that moment the usual morning service was going on in the church. Arising from
her sleep, Euphemia once again saw the holy martyrs, who said to her: “Rejoice, daughter, and
recognize your surroundings; we have fulfilled our promise; now go in peace to your mother .” The
saints then became invisible, while Euphemia joyously began to tell everyone who was in church,
and later all her relatives and compatriots, about the miracle that had happened to her. And all the
people glorified God and His saints.