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THE FIFTH MONTH
TIR 29
(February 06)

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IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT,
ONE GOD. AMEN.

On this day died Saint ‘Aksani (Xenae), which is, being interpreted, “stranger.” This holy woman was the daughter of rich and noble parents of the city of Rome, and she was their only child. And she fought the spiritual fight from her youth up, and she fasted and prayed frequently by day and by night, and she went to a certain house of virgins in the city of Rome, and devoted herself to them. What food the servants used to bring her from her father’s house she gave to the poor and needy, and she ate the food, which the virgins ate. And she was always reading the histories of nuns, and she made many petitions to God that He would make her a companion to them. And her father betrothed her to a certain nobleman of the city of Rome, and they arrayed her in glorious apparel, and adorned her with jewels of gold and silver. And when the day of the marriage-feast and the marriage arrived, he said unto her mother, “O my mother, when ye have given me in marriage, for some time I shall not be able to go to the nunnery. I wish to go to visit them now, and to embrace and salute them, and I will return quickly.” And her mother said unto her, “Go, my daughter, and tarry not.” When her mother said this to her, ‘Aksani (Xenae) took all her ornaments of gold and silver, and her royal apparel, and with her two handmaidens she departed and went to the sea, where she found a ship which was sailing for the island of Cyprus, and she with her handmaidens embarked in the ship and arrived in the island of Cyprus. And she called herself ‘Aksani (Xenae), which is being interpreted, “stranger.” And she went to Saint Epiphanius, and told him all her business, and he sent her to the city of Alexandria. And when she arrived there the Apostle Paul appeared unto her in a dream and told her everything, which she was to do, and called her by her name. And on the following day she visited Saint Theophilus, the archbishop, and she shaved off the hair of her head, and he arrayed her in the garb of the men. And she sold all she had with her, both her silver ornaments and her apparel, and she built a church in the name of Saint Stephen the Protomartyr. And she and certain of the principal virgins and nuns all lived in that church, and this holy woman fought a great spiritual fight. She ate nothing else except herbs. She slept upon the bare ground and had no mattress, and she lived in this way, and carried on her good fight, and the working of righteousness for a period of more than eight years. Then she fell sick a little and died, and on the day of her death God, the Most High, revealed that she was blessed by the grace of heaven in the following manner: At the time of her death, at noon, the people saw a cross of light, and the brilliancy thereof exceeded that of the sun, and brilliant stars surrounded the cross like a crown, and it continued to shine in this wise until they had laid the body of the saint with the bodies of the virgins, and then it disappeared. And the people who were there knew that the cross and the stars had appeared because of the holy woman. And straightway the two handmaidens told the archbishop and all the people about the strife of this saint, from the beginning until the day of her death, and how she changed her name and called herself ‘Aksani (Xenae), and how she conjured them to conceal her and her secret, and how she always behaved towards them as their sister and not as their mistress. And the archbishop and all the people marveled at this, and they wrote an account of her strife from the beginning unto the end thereof.

And on this day also is commemorated Cyriacus, the martyr and fighter.

And on this day also are commemorated the pure women of Rome, and Philemumna, and Juliana, and Sarabamon, and Abba Gabra Nazrawi of Kawat, and the righteous men of Dabra Dagi (Degua Me’Elaa).

And on this day also is commemorated the festival of the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ by our Lady Mary, the holy Virgin.

And on this day also is commemorated Abba Stephen Falasi (the “stranger”) of the desert of the Fayyum. This holy man was a fighter, and he sought after the manner of the saints who were in the desert. One day whilst he was wandering about in the desert, he found a skull, which had been cast out, and this lay by itself, and it had no flesh on it. When Saint Stephen saw it he asked God to make it to inform him concerning the history of the man to whom it belonged, and what kind of faith he had. And straightway there came forth a voice from the skull, saying, “I was a merchant, but did not travel to make money, I knew nothing about alms, and I was satisfied with the multitude of possessions which I had. One day as I was traveling on a journey to a far country I came to a desert place wherein there was no water, and as the heat of the place became very great the camels died, and the servants fled, and I was left alone. On the third day mine eyes became heavy, and I heard as it were a whistling sound, and my spirit went forth from me, and took me into a place of punishment to be rewarded according to my works. And I said unto the judges ‘grant me permission to tell you of my doings,’ but they would not listen to me. And now I pray that thou wilt pray to God to have mercy upon me for thy sake.” And the saint prayed to God for him, and that he might not return to the place of torment. And he heard a voice, which said unto him, “I have spared him for thy sake.” When Abba Stephen heard this he went into his cell weeping, and beating his breast, and he continued his fight until he died. [This text is faulty in several places.]

Salutation to Thy Birth, O Lamp of the Darkness.

Salutation to ‘Aksani (Xenae) the stranger.

Salutation to Stephen, of the desert of the Fayyum.

Salutation to Cyriacus the fighter.

Salutation to you, ye white ears of wheat of Dabra Dagi (Degua Me’Elaa).

Salutation to Gabra Nazrawi.

Glory be to God Who is glorified in His Saints. Amen.