

Commemoration of the Maccabees, Sts. Eleazar the Priest, Shamuna and her seven Sons

In the second century BC, Judea was under the rule of the Seleucids. During the reign of King Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria, he attempted to force Greek paganism on his Jewish subjects. A priest named Mattathias, along with his sons and brothers, revolted against the king and remained loyal and faithful to God. One of Mattathias' sons, Judas, acted with distinction and special bravery in this revolt. As a result, he received the Greek epithet "Maccabeus" which means hammer or hammer-like. Later, this name is applied to his entire family, and they began to be called Maccabees.

Eleazar the Priest was another of Mattathias' sons. He too was brave, pious and wise. The king attempted to force him to eat pork, which according to Jewish law, is prohibited. Being reared in the spirit of God's divine commandments and laws, he refused the king's order, and preferred to die heroically, saving his reputation and honor. Following subjugation to long and brutal tortures, Eleazar was killed and became a source of courage and inspiration for generations to come.

The martyrdom of a brave mother and her seven sons also dates back to the same period. Like the priest Eleazar, they also were ordered to eat pork. Her sons were tormented and killed one by one before their mother, but all remained steadfast in their faith. At the end, Shamuna is also put to death for having remained loyal to faith of their forefathers.

The Maccabees and their story have long been viewed as a source of inspiration for remaining steadfast in the faith and loyal to God. In our own Church tradition and history, we learn that Saint Vartan read from the Books of the Maccabees to the Armenian soldiers on the eve of the Battle of Avarayr in 451 AD.

The martyrdom of the prophets of the Old Testament named Maccabees can be found in 1 Maccabees 1:30-64 and 2 Maccabees 5:24 - 7:41.

When is celebrated

14.07.2008
03.08.2009

26.07.2010
07.02.2011
30.07.2012
22.07.2013
03.02.2014
27.07.2015
18.07.2016
30.01.2017
23.07.2018
04.02.2019
03.08.2020
26.07.2021
31.01.2022
31.07.2023
22.07.2024
03.02.2025
27.07.2026
19.07.2027
31.01.2028
23.07.2029
04.02.2030