

November 27

Siddharta Gotama Buddha (ca. 560 - ca. 480 BCE) righteous among the nations

Siddharta Gotama was born around the year 560 BCE. His father was *rajah* of the Sakya region, which extended from the slopes of the Himalaya to the Ganges river, and a future of power and wealth awaited Siddharta. But his direct, violent experience of the three unavoidable realities that menace human happiness - old age, illness, and death - led him to abandon his worldly values and begin a journey of renunciation, which he continued for the rest of his life.

Alongside this experience, another decisive moment for the young prince was his discovery of monastic asceticism, which marked the beginning of a phase of his life devoted to extreme self-denial. Yet as he came to understand that radical asceticism often conceals pride, Siddharta underwent another, still deeper crisis. Entering into the depths of himself, he discovered that the Buddha, or Enlightened One, dwelled in his own heart.

After living for a time in profound solitude and abandoning all other forms of asceticism, Siddharta felt awakened to new life. He began to preach his way of inner pacification and harmony with all creatures to everyone he met, and continued preaching until he died, traditionally at the age of seventy. Christians were deeply struck by the story of how Siddharta's life had been changed by his encounter with a Tibetan monk. Around the eighth century of the common era, *The Life of Barlaam and Joasaf*, clearly inspired by the story of Gotama Buddha, appeared in or near Palestine. Translated into Latin, it was read by Christians worldwide. In this tale, an Indian prince named Joasaf meets the Christian monk Barlaam, converts to Christianity, and begins to announce a way of inner joy and peace with all of creation.

Barlaam and Joasaf are commemorated by the Orthodox churches on August 26, and their names are listed under today's date in the Roman Martyrology.

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

Facundo and Primitivus (?), martyrs in Galicia (Spanish-Mozarabic calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (18 hatur/hedâj-):

Philip, apostle (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:

Virgil of Salzburg (d. 784), bishop and apostle Carinthia

MARONITES:

James Intercisus (d. 420), martyr

Barlaam and Joasaf (see above)

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

James the Persian, megalomartyr

WEST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:

James Intercisus, martyr

EAST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:

James Intercisus, martyr