

**O HOLY FATHER, PHYSICIAN OF OUR SOULS AND BODIES,  
HAVE MERCY, FORGIVE, AND SAVE YOUR SERVANT**  
***“O Holy Unmercenaries and Wonder-workers, visit our infirmities,  
freely you have received, freely give to us.”***  
[Apolytikion of Saints Kosmas and Damian]

During the course of the year, there are many healing saints listed on the church calendar. The summer months are no exception; in fact, healing saints seem to be even more prominent. We will look briefly at some specific examples shortly, but first: **What does it mean for one to be a ‘healing saint’?** That title simply means that miracles of healing have been attributed to the saint in question. In other words, through the prayers of that saint, the Lord has granted the gift of healing – possibly even in a unique way and possibly more than once (which is often the case).

In every case of a healing saint, one should never confuse the ultimate source of healing – it is not the saint him- or her-self, but God who heals, through that saint. In fact, in the case of miraculous works being performed during the life of the saint, they would always (and appropriately so) give all credit to God. For that matter, notice that when the priest anoints someone with Holy Unction, he says: *“O Holy Father, Physician of our souls and bodies, have mercy, forgive, and save your servant.”* **We turn to the healing saint because of the obvious effectiveness of their intercessory prayers (since they so clearly exemplify living a life in Christ, thus able to do greater things than one could ever imagine.**

Among the healing saints commemorated in July and August are: Saints Cosmas & Damianos (commemorate on July 1<sup>st</sup> and November 1<sup>st</sup>), Saint Paraskevi (commemorated on July 26<sup>th</sup>), Saint Panteleimon (commemorated on July 27<sup>th</sup>), and, of course, the Theotokos (August 15<sup>th</sup>). **Each of these saints have had healing miracles attributed to them and is worthy of honor.** However, chief among all saints is the Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary. We commemorate her Dormition (when she passed from this life) on August 15<sup>th</sup>.

**The very basis of the practice of the Paraklesis services is founded upon the many miracles, have been attributed to her, including the gathering of all the Apostles upon her death (some traditions saying that Thomas was delayed, similar to after the Lord’s Resurrection).** Among the most popular locations dedicated to her Great Grace (“Megalochari”) is the Annunciation Church in Tinos, Greece, where numerous miracles have been attributed. The Theotokos has been an important part in the lives of the healing saints.

Briefly looking at the other healing saints identified above: **Saints Cosmas and Damianos** were brothers and benevolent physicians. As they healed, they preached Christ. They cured by using herbs and with the help of the Theotokos. **People referred to them, not so often by their names, but by the title of “Anargyri,” meaning they took no silver, or pay.** The Apolytikion quoted above is from their feast.

**Saint Paraskevi** lived in the second century and, being impressed by parents’ Christian lifestyle, followed their example. Towards the end of her life, Emperor Antonius Pius had her placed in large kettle of hot oil and tar and when she was placed in it, the liquid cooled down. He wondered what she did to cool it and concluded that she was a magician. **Paraskevi took some of the liquid in her hands and threw it in his face, which blinded him.** When she cured him, he released her and ended his persecutions. She was later martyred and is especially known as a healer of the visually impaired.

**Saint Panteleimon’s** name, given to him later in life, means “all-merciful.” He was a physician serving in the royal court and, upon becoming a Christian, cured with knowledge and with faith. Through prayer, Panteleimon restored to life a boy killed by a viper. Once he become a Christian, Panteleimon gave out his whole fortune and had patients accept Christ as his only ‘fee.’ **While he was being persecuted, he prayed over paralytic who began to walk.** When he was placed in an arena with wild beasts, they only walked around him peacefully. He was eventually beheaded and milk – not blood – flowed from his wound, and the olive tree to which he was tied immediately blossomed and brought forth fruit. He is particularly known as a healer of the crippled.

Let us remember to turn to these healing saints whenever in need, and at other times as well. **Through their prayers, and the prayers of all the saints, may our Lord protect us – physically and spiritually – always.**

*Fr. Anthony Stratis*