# August 9

**German of Alaska** (ca. 1756-1836) monk

Today Christians of the Byzantine tradition commemorate German of Alaska, the founder of New Valaam monastery and patron of the Orthodox Church of America. Born near Moscow around the year 1756, German entered the St. Sergius - Trinity Lavra at the age of sixteen, and later moved to Valaam monastery on Lake Ladoga.

At the discovery of the Aleutian Islands, German was sent to evangelize Alaska. Ill-equipped for the rigors of Siberian and Alaskan winters and treated with hostility by the leaders of the Russian-American expedition, he was eventually abandoned by the few monks and priests who had accompanied him, and found himself alone on Pine Island.

Without despairing, although he had nothing to fall back on but his faith and his monastic vocation, German built a small center for prayer, which later became New Valaam monastery.

Locals began to gather at his simple dwelling, and with time their numbers grew. German showed them fatherly care for the rest of his life, devoting himself in particular to orphaned children. In addition to exercising the ministry of spiritual fatherhood, he shared his rudimentary knowledge of agriculture and other simple crafts with his neighbors.

German died on November 15, 1836 (November 28 according to the Gregorian calendar), surrounded by his first disciples. He is the patron saint of Alaskan Christians and of all of America's Orthodox.

BIBLICAL READINGS

1 Cor 10:12-22; Mt 16:20-24

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**Edith Stein** (1891-1942) Jewish martyr and nun

In 1942 Edith Stein, a Christian nun and martyr of Israel, died at the concentration camp of Auschwitz.

Born to a Jewish family of Breslau in 1891, Edith was a brilliant philosophy student and became Edmund Husserl's assistant at the age of only twenty-six. Not entirely satisfied with what her studies offered her, she began to experience an anxiety that gradually led her to orient her life towards Christianity. After her baptism in 1922, she decided to devote as much time as she could to prayer, so as to learn "to live hand in hand with the Lord."

In 1933, the year Hitler came to power in Germany, Edith entered the Carmelite monastery in Cologne after much silent reflection, and took the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. Yet this was not the last step in her vocational search. In those years she wrote, "The urgent desire to be holocaustum continues to grow in me."

With the advent of Nazism, everything seemed to forecast an imminent convergence of her scholarly research, which she concluded by publishing the significantly-titled work The Science of the Cross, with her own existential journey, in a union of knowledge and practice that has always been dear to Judaism. When the moment came for Edith to set out on the last leg of her journey, which would take her and her sister Rose to Auschwitz, her only words were, "Let us go, for our people." In Edith Stein's life, the sacrifice of the Cross was both the summit of her prayerful searching under the Spirit's guidance, and her way of sharing the suffering of her people. In doing so, she joined her own life to that of the Suffering Servant, who had made his own sacrifice "with an eternal Spirit" and had given it meaning through love's purifying fire.

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A READING

*Edith's former mentor, the philosopher Husserl, had this to say about her decision to enter the monastery: "When all is said and done, in the heart of every Jew there is an absolutism and love for the 'sanctification of God's Name,' that is, for martyrdom."*

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THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:
*Mary Summer* (d. 1921), founder of the Mothers' Union

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (3 misra/nahasse):
*Simeon the Stylite the Old* (4th-5th cent.), monk (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:
*Adam Reusner* (d. 1575), Svevian poet; *Edith Stein*, witness to the point of bloodshed from Breslavia

MARONITES:
*Matthias*, apostle
*Jean-Baptiste Marie Vianney*, Curé d'Ars

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
*Matthias*

, apostle
*German of Alaska*, monk (Orthodox Church of America)
*Clement*, bishop of Ohrida (Serbian Church)