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THE FIRMNESS OF HIS FAITH REMAINS UNTOUCHED

Neither scholar nor cleric, nor missionary or statesman, but simply an untutored man of low station in life; this describes the man who became known as MARTYR BARLAAM. The highest honor that our church can bestow on a person was obtained by him around his 90th year!

Hailing from Antioch, Barlaam lived during the fourth century. Throughout his long life, Barlaam fondly embraced our Lord and all that He represented. As with a magnet, his love for the Savior drew him closer and closer to God. Barlaam's pure heart endeared him to his fellow Christians.

As an aged man, he was swept up during a wave of persecution. Unbelievers resented Barlaam for his faith so he was thrown into prison and tortured. During a pagan holiday, Barlaam was taken to a temple where a dishonorable judge hoped to make him offer a sacrifice to idols. He was forced to stretch out his hand over an altar, upon which a fire was lit. They placed burning incense in his hand, as if it were a brass censer. The valiant soldier for Christ did not pull away from the heat of the flame. His hand did not flee but remained where it was, bravely overcoming the immeasurable but temporal pain. The red-hot fire battled with his hand but was defeated. War was waged between flame and hand, but the martyr's will prevailed. Although Barlaam's flesh was entirely charred and withered, he feared not this passing misfortune; he awaited his everlasting reward. He willingly entered into eternal rest, never denying our Lord.

Barlaam was written about in glowing terms by no less than St. John Chrysostom who expressed affection for this elderly martyr. A homily by John eloquently told Barlaam's inspirational story.