

THE 20th DAY OF THE MONTH OF MARCH
COMMEMORATION OF OUR FATHERS SLAIN IN THE MONASTERY OF ST. SABBAS
AT VESPERS

On “Lord, I have cried ...,” 3 Stichera of the venerable martyrs, in Tone IV:

Spec. Mel.: “As one valiant among the martyrs ...”:

Utterly loving the ultimate Goal of thy desire, * O venerable ones, * ye accounted the beauties of life to be but dung; * and through vigil and prayer, * through rain and burning heat, * ye acquired those things which alone are lasting; * and having dwelt together as one, * by grace ye were shown to be ** dwellers with the angels.

Beaten with staves, * stoned with rocks, * cut down with swords, * ye did not break your oneness of mind, O martyrs, * bound together by love and fraternal desire; * yet, slain together, * your members cut off, O passion-bearers, * ye have set yourselves upon the altar of God ** as unblemished sacrifices.

Consumed by fire, * laid waste by suffocation, * ye committed your souls into the hands of the King of all * as unblemished sacrifices, O glorious martyrs; * having joined yourselves to the choirs of the incorporeal powers, * and inherited everlasting glory, * pray ye unceasingly, * that those who praise you ** may also have a share therein.

Glory ..., Both now ..., Theotokion, in Tone IV:

O Virgin who hast given birth * unto my God and Savior, * grant me the choice and saving remedy of repentance: * a torrent of tears, * and the thought of the dread and awesome hour * of the impartial judgment; * that by thy supplications * I may escape fearsome torment ** and receive divine grace.

Stavrotheotokion: Beholdings Thee * nailed to the Cross, O Lord, * the ewe-lamb Thy Mother marveled * and cried out: “What is this that I see, * O my Son most desired? * How hast Thou been rewarded * by the unfaithful and iniquitous assembly * which hath enjoyed Thy many miracles? ** Yet glory to Thine ineffable condescension, O Master!”

AT MATINS

Canon to the venerable martyrs, the acrostic
whereof is: "With hymns I glorify the martyrs who shared one way of life," the
composition of Stephen the Sabbaite, in Tone VIII:

ODE I

Irmos: Let us, O ye people, send up a hymn * unto our wondrous God * Who hath freed Israel from bondage, * chanting a hymn of victory * and crying aloud: * We sing unto Thee, O only Master.

Grant me to hymn and praise the divinely crowned multitude of Thy sacred martyrs, O Christ, that by their entreaties I may be granted light from Heaven, and thereby raise a divinely crowned hymn to them.

Having fled the world of deadly pleasures, O ye spiritually rich confessors, ye cast off the defilement of the flesh and spirit; and lived angelic lives, passing on to the dwelling places on high.

Manifestly ordering your members and senses in accordance with the law of the Spirit, ye showed yourselves to be temples dedicated to God, O God-bearing martyrs; for Christ made His abode within you.

Having left corruptible wealth behind on earth and disdained the beautiful things of life like a dream, O saints, pleasing Christ ye have now received the unshakable kingdom.

Theotokion: Thou hast been shown to be the noetic ladder which Jacob, the chosen one of God, beheld, and from whence by His ineffable Word the Incorporeal One passed Who, in a manner past all telling, became flesh through thee without change, O Theotokos.

ODE III

Irmos: O Lord, Creator of the vault of Heaven * and Builder of the Church, * do Thou strengthen me in Thy love, O Summit of desire, * O Support of the faithful, * O only Lover of mankind.

Having sanctified your whole blameless life, O martyrs, ye truly offered yourselves up to the all-seeing God as divine immolations, receiving perfect crowns.

As dedicated disciples of the God-bearing Sabbas, desiring to withdraw from the tumults of the world, ye attained unto everlasting life, unerringly traversing the path of tribulation.

Having cultivated the seed which was the word of God sown within you, and watered it abundantly with streams of tears, O venerable ones, bearing fruit ye have offered grain unto God an hundredfold.

Theotokion: **H**aving dwelt in the Virgin in the flesh, O Lord, Thou didst appear as a man, as it was fitting for Thee to be seen; and Thou hast shown her to be the true Theotokos and help of the faithful, O Thou only Lover of mankind.

Sessional Hymn, in Tone VIII:

Spec. Mel.: “That which was mystically ordered ...”:

Having mortified the fiery assaults and movements of the passions, O God-pleasing fasters, following the steps of God Who alone hath wrought all things, ye were beaten, slain and cut down with violence by slaughter at the hands of barbarians, offering yourselves up to Him as living and hallowed sacrifices.

Glory ..., Both now ..., Theotokion in Tone VIII:

O divinely joyous, pure and blessed one, with the powers on High, the archangels and all the incorporeal ones, beseech Him Who was born of thee out of the loving-kindness of His compassions; that before the end He grant us forgiveness, the cleansing of our sins and amendment of life, that we may find mercy.

Stavrotheotokion: **E**ver protected by the Cross of thy Son and God, O Virgin, we vanquish the assaults and wiles of the demons, hymning thee who art truly the Theotokos; and all generations bless thee with love, O most pure one, as thou didst foretell. Wherefore, by thy supplications grant us forgiveness of sins.

ODE IV

Irmos: **T**hou didst mount Thy steeds O Lord, * Thine apostles, * and taking their bridles in Thy hands, * Thy chariot became salvation unto those who sing with faith: * Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Beholding the invincible martyrs, adorned with divers virtues, persevering in the waterless desert, the enemy became inflamed with wickedness, and, imbued with hatred, prepared himself for an assault upon you.

The evil serpent, having rooted deception for this purpose within his disciples, instructed the barbarian tribes in the slaying of one another, and to thereby drive the venerable from the desert.

The enemy of the righteous, having savagely gathered to him those who were round about him, was unable to drive the invincible ones away; and, invisibly vanquished, he arrayed himself against them visibly.

Full of poison and rage, the prince of wickedness and his warriors launched themselves, descended like wild beasts upon the blessed ones, and spilled torrents of their blood by inflicting upon them unbearable wounds.

Those whose hope was earthly sought for transitory things: a treasure of corruptible gold; but, rendered steadfast, the valorous ones, placing their trust in heaven, cried aloud: Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Mercilessly, like wild beasts, they tortured the venerable ones with staves, swords and stoning, commanding them to tell where their choice treasures were hid; but they all remained steadfast through the law of love.

Theotokion: **O** Virgin and Mother, thou art the adornment of the apostles, the confirmation of the holy martyrs, the boast of the venerable, and the salvation of those who sweetly chant with faith: Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

ODE V

Irmos: **O** Light never-waning, * why hast Thou turned Thy face from me * and why hath the alien darkness surrounded me, * wretched though I be? * But do Thou guide my steps I implore Thee * and turn me back towards the light of Thy commandments.

The venerable ones, having learned the union of the perfection of love, laid down their lives for their friends, and taught by Thee, O Savior, emulated Thy voluntary passion more than others.

O Christ Who wast willingly born in the flesh in a supra-natural manner, at Thy command the martyrs showed themselves to be mightier than death; for, having been brought together by Thy law, the divinely-wise right laudably hastened to die for their friends.

Having sprinkled your souls with the noetic hyssop of baptism, ye were straightway sprinkled with your blood, O venerable ones; and tried like gold in the fire, ye became a pleasing and sweet-smelling sacrifice unto God.

Theotokion: Having acquired maternal boldness before thy Son, O most pure one, disdain not forethought for thy kin, we pray, that we may set thee alone before the Master as the merciful cleansing of Christians.

ODE VI

Irmos: From the depths of sin I cried unto the Lord, * Who is able to save me? * and He led my life out of corruption, * in that He is the Lover of mankind.

The favored ones of Christ did not fear the threats of the barbarians; for they continually made their life a training ground for death.

Thinking to enrich themselves, the impious mercilessly tortured the non-acquisitive ones; but they, having cast aside corruptible things, acquired incorruptible things.

Invested with invincible power, the athletes of Christ vanquished the noetic destroyers and the insolence of the barbarians.

Theotokion: As on a light cloud the reigning Lord came upon thee, O all-immaculate one, to cast down the works of the hands of the Egyptians.

Kontakion of the venerable martyrs, in Tone IV:

Spec. Mel.: “Having been lifted up ...”:

Having manifestly disdained the pleasure of earthly and corruptible things, * and chosen a life in the desert, * despising the most beautiful things of this world * and food which passeth away, O most blessed ones, * ye hence were accounted worthy of

the kingdom of heaven * and are gladdened with the choirs of martyrs and fasters. * Wherefore, honoring your memory, * we earnestly cry out to you: ** Deliver us from tribulations, O fathers!

ODE VII

Irmos: **Having quenched the all-consuming power of the Chaldean furnace * with the form of the Angel, that had descended therein, * the children cried out to the Creator: * Blessed and praised art Thou, O God of our fathers!**

The hostility of the hordes of the adversaries, visible and invisible, grew weak at the sight of the wounded martyrs who chanted: Blessed and praised art Thou, O God of our fathers!

Having wed themselves to Thee, O Christ, casting aside kin and homeland and wealth, wounded with desire for Thee, they that fled to Thee for refuge loved Thee Who alone existest, O our Redeemer, the God of our fathers!

The bloodlust of the barbarians did not alter Thy lovers of desert service, O Christ; for they did not fear those who slay the body, holding fast to Thy commandment as an unshakable foundation.

Having turned their desire from the world towards Thee and armed themselves solely against the spirit of sin, Thy favored ones pleased Thee, embraced by divinely wise thought, O Lord Christ.

O martyrs, receiving within you the law written upon the tablets of your hearts, ye preached the One God in Trinity, crying out to Him: Blessed and praised art Thou, O God of our fathers!

Theotokion: **O** ye that walk in the light of the Lord, come, let us hymn the divine gateway of the King of kings, pure Mary who is truly the Theotokos, for she is the hope of our souls.

ODE VIII

Irmos: **The divinely plucked harp of piety * played a different hymn than the instruments of impiety: * O ye works of the Lord, bless Christ throughout the ages!**

The equals of the angels, vying with the ranks of heaven, standing all night in vigils, sang: All ye works of the Lord, bless Christ throughout the ages!

Taking up their cross, with all their heart the martyrs followed after Thee, the Master, chanting: All ye works of the Lord, bless Christ throughout the ages!

Having purified body, soul and spirit equally, consumed in the fire, O fathers, ye offered yourselves up as whole-burnt offerings to God, supremely exalting Christ throughout all ages.

Trinitarian: **L**et those who utter blasphemy, saying that Thou Who art indivisible art in two hypostases, be put to shame as ones who honor a godhead of four persons; for we worship Thee alone as One of the divine Trinity.

ODE IX

Irmos: Heaven was stricken with awe, * and the ends of the earth were filled with amazement, * for God hath appeared in the flesh, * and thy womb was rendered more spacious than the heavens. * Wherefore, the ranks of men and of angels * magnify thee as the Theotokos.

Having trained themselves in divers ways and overcome the machinations of the ruler of this world, the fasters, like athletes, put to shame the malice of the barbarians, enduring their assaults. Wherefore, they received twofold crowns from the just Judge of the contest.

Leading a life of fasting in caves and caverns, O blessed ones, ye were confined within a narrow cave in a lightless defile; and dyed with your own blood, consumed by fire and cruelly suffocated by smoke admixed with steam, ye were shown to be victorious.

We hymn your feats which transcend nature, whereby ye contended against sin, youthfully opposing it as warriors of Christ, O glorious ones; for right gloriously did ye overcome it. And now, standing before the Most High with the ranks of the saints, remember us.

Arrayed in the heavens with thrice-radiant splendor, as dutiful children of Sabbas your father and instructor, O blessed ones, pray on behalf of us your fellow disciples and chanters, that communal peace be granted to the Churches and salvation to our souls.

Theotokion: As the Mother of the Redeemer, O most pure one, thou hast once more summoned us who have rejected the life of heaven and wretchedly fallen into death; and thou hast deemed us worthy to hasten again to our first homeland. Wherefore, we unceasingly magnify thee, O Mother of God.