



**The Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebastia  
Whom the Holy Church Celebrates on March 9.**

These holy martyrs, who came from various lands, were all soldiers under the same general. Taken into custody for their faith in Christ, and at first interrogated by cruel means, they were then stripped of their clothing and cast onto the frozen lake which is at Sebastia of Pontus, at a time when the harsh and freezing weather was at its worst. They endured the whole night naked in such circumstances, encouraging one another to be patient until the end. He that guarded them, Aglaius, who was commanded to receive any of them that might deny Christ, had a vision in which he saw heavenly powers distributing crowns to all of the Martyrs, except one, who soon after abandoned the contest. Seeing this, Aglaius professed himself a Christian and joined the Martyrs on the lake, and the number of forty remained complete. In the morning, when they were almost dead from the cold, they were cast into fire, after which the remains were thrown into the river. Thus they finished the good course of their martyrdom in 320, during the reign of Licinius. These are their names: Acacius, Aetius, Aglaius, Alexander, Angus, Athanasius, Candidus, Chudion, Claudius, Cyril, Cyrion, Dometian, Heraclius, Hesychius, John, Lysimachus, Melition, Nicholas, Philoctemon, Priscus, Sacerdon, Severian, Sisinius, Smaragdus, Theodulus, Theophilus, Valens, Valerius, Vivianus, and Xanthias.

Rest from labour. Wine and Oil allowed.

*Dismissal Hymn. First Tone*

**B**E Thou entreated for the sake of the sufferings of Thy Saints which they endured for Thee, O Lord, and do Thou heal all our pains, we pray, O Friend of man.

*Kontakion. Plagal of Second Tone*

**H**AVING left every military array of the world, ye cleaved unto the Master Who is in the Heavens, O Forty Prizewinners of the Lord; for having passed through fire and water, O blessed ones, ye rightly received glory from heaven and a multitude of crowns.

**VESPERS**

*Second tone. By John the Monk*

**N**OBLY enduring things present, and rejoicing in things hoped for, the holy Martyrs said one to the another: Shall we not indeed strip off this garment? Yea rather, let us cast off the old man. Bitter is winter, but sweet is Paradise; painful is this freezing, but pleasant shall be that enjoyment. Let us not waver, O fellow soldiers. Let us endure for a little while, that we may put on the crowns of victory given by Christ God, the Saviour of our souls.

*Same Tone. By the Same*

**C**ASTING off all their garments and stepping fearlessly onto the lake, the holy Martyrs said one to another: For the sake of Paradise, which we lost, let us not cleave to a corruptible garment today. Because of the Serpent, we once put it on a garment that worketh corruption; let us now put it off for the sake of the resurrection of all. Let us despise the destroying cold and let us hate the flesh, that we may put on the crowns of victory given by Christ, the Saviour of our souls.

*Same Tone. By the Same*

**L**OOKING upon the torments as upon delights, and running to the frozen lake as unto a warm embrace, the holy Martyrs said: Let us not fear the wintry season, that we may escape the dread Gehenna of fire. Let our foot burn, that it may dance eternally. Let our hand contract, that it may be raised unto the Lord;

and let us not spare our mortal nature. Let us choose death, that we may put on crowns of victory given by Christ God, the Saviour of our souls.

Both now. *Theotokion. When he took Thee*

**C**ARRIED off by vile and darkened deeds, \* blackening the beauty of Baptism by mine own will and choice, \* I have wrapped a robe of condemnation round my soul \* and have wretchedly clothed myself \* in garments of darkness. \* O all-blameless Lady, I entreat thee: By thy might, \* scatter the dark clouds of my passions, \* and do thou clothe me, who am naked, \* with the robe of incorruption, and save me.

### OIKOS

**O** THOU Who art borne upon an unapproachable throne, Who stretchest out the heaven as it were a curtain, Who hast established the earth and gathered the waters into their congregations, Who hast created all things out of nothing that they might have their being, and bestowest breath and life upon all, Who acceptest the hymn of the Archangels, and art glorified by the Angels, and art worshiped by all, O Christ, O Almighty, our Creator and God, I, unworthy as I am, fall down before Thee, offering my supplication and asking for grace of speech, that even I might be able reverently to praise the Spirits whom Thou Thyself hast shown forth as victors, giving them glory from Heaven and a multitude of crowns.

### SYNAXARION

On the ninth of this month we commemorate the Holy Great Forty Martyrs, who were martyred in the city of Sebastia: Hesychius, Meliton, Heraclius, Smaragdus, Domnus, Eunoicus, Valens, Vivianus, Claudius, Priscus, Theodulus, Euty chius, John, Xanthias, Helianus, Sisinius, Cyrion, Angus, Aetius, Flavius, Acacius, Ecdicius, Lysimachus, Alexander, Elias, Candidus, Theophilus, Dometian, Gaius, Gorgonius, Euty ches, Athanasius, Cyril, Sacerdon, Nicholas, Valerius, Philoctemon, Severian, Chudion, and Aglaius the prison-guard.

### Verses

We fill up the lack in Thy suff' rings, O Saviour:  
For behold, the bones of us forty are broken.

On the ninth, forty men's bones were broken.

On this day the holy Martyrs, a Grandfather, a Grandmother, Father, Mother, and Two Children were perfected in martyrdom by the sword.

*Verses*

Six kindred persons by the sword have contended:  
Two parents, two children, two parents, two children.

By their holy intercessions, O God, have mercy on us. Amen.

ODE SEVEN

*Troparia*

**H**E that guarded the Forty Martyrs was astonished when he beheld the crowns; and despising love for this life, he took wing on fervent love for Thy glory which was manifested to him, and with the Martyrs he chanted: Blessed art Thou, the God of our Fathers.

**R**UNNING to the soul-destroying bath-house, the lover of life perished; but the lover of Christ, becoming an excellent plunderer of the things he beheld, was as though in a bath of incorruption and chanted with the martyrs: Blessed art Thou, the God of our Fathers.

**S**INCE a spiritual fire was kindled in the hearts of the Forty, the crafty folly of the ungodly was consumed like melting wax, while unto Thee, O Christ, the Martyrs sang: Blessed art Thou, the God of our Fathers.

**H**OW exceedingly radiant and majestic is the power of the Cross, O Christ, which plaiteth crowns for the Forty Martyrs by means of their adversaries! For having passed through fire and water, they cry out in incorruption: Blessed art Thou, the God of our Fathers.

ODE EIGHT

*Troparia*

**S**INCE the members of your bodies were mercilessly crushed for Christ's sake, and ye yourselves were offered unto God as a divine whole-burnt offering, ye rejoice with the Angels, O Martyrs, praising Christ unto the ages.

**W**ITH courage of heart, the mother beloved of God taketh upon her shoulders him whom she hath borne, and offereth him, the fruit of piety, as a Martyr with the Martyrs, imitating the priestly ministry of Abraham.

**D**EPART straight on the course that leadeth to unending life, O my son, cried the Christ-loving mother to her Christ-loving child. I cannot carry thee a second time to appear before God, the Setter of the contest.

ODE NINE  
Troperia

**S**TRIPPED naked and stoned for Christ's sake, ye patiently endured the cold of the air, and the freezing of the water, and the crushing of your members; and burnt in the fire, ye shine in the flood of the river like far-beaming luminaries, O Forty Martyrs.

Glory. *Plagal of First Tone. By John the Monk*

**O**PRIZEWINNERS of Christ, ye have made the most venerable Fast more radiant with the memorial of your glorious contest; for being forty in number, ye sanctify these forty days, having imitated the saving Passion in your contest for Christ. Wherefore, since ye have boldness, intercede that in peace we may attain unto the Resurrection on the third day of the God and Saviour of our souls.



On the Holy Forty Martyrs  
by Saint Basil the Great

**S**HALL he that loves the Martyrs ever be satiated with celebrating their memory? The honor that we fellow-servants render to these stalwarts is the proof of our affection towards our common Master. For assuredly, he that lauds courageous men, in similar circumstances will not fail to emulate them himself. Wholeheartedly bless the sufferings of the martyrs so that you might become a martyr by your volition, and, without persecution, without fire, without scourging, you might be shown worthy of recompenses in no way differing from theirs.

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**† THE HOLY AND GREAT FORTY MARTYRS OF SEBASTIA.  
(FRESCO ON MOUNT ATHOS)**

In the year 313 AD, Saint Constantine the Great signed a law decreeing freedom of religious faith. His co-ruler, Emperor Licinius seconded this law; however, in the provinces subject to him, the persecution of the Christians continued as before.

In the year 320 AD, these holy Martyrs, who came from various lands, were all soldiers under the same general, who tried to force them to bring a sacrifice to the idols, which they refused to do. Taken into custody for their faith in Christ, and at first interrogated by cruel means, they were then stripped of their clothing and cast onto the

frozen lake which is at Sebastia of Pontus, at a time when the harsh and freezing weather was at its worst. This torment was made more difficult for them, since a warm vapour-bath was placed on the shore of the lake to tempt them to leave the freezing water.

They endured the whole night naked in such circumstances, encouraging one another to be patient and singing holy hymns to God until the end. He that guarded them, named Aglaius, who was commanded to receive any of them that might deny Christ, had a vision in which he saw heavenly powers distributing crowns to all of the Martyrs, except one. The one who abandoned the contest hurried into the bath, but as soon as the warm air touched his body he died. Seeing this, Aglaius professed himself a Christian and joined the Martyrs on the lake, and the number of forty remained complete. In the morning, when they were almost dead from the cold the torturers broke the martyrs' shins with mallets and cast them into fire, after which their remains were thrown into the river.

The torturers, however, almost left one of the martyrs behind. Although he was practically lifeless, yet still breathing, his mother took her son on her shoulders putting him on the cart together with his companions so that he would be burned with them and thus complete his martyrdom.

Even though these Martyrs had completed their martyric struggle by having been burned alive, and then having their incinerated relics cast into a river, these relics shone from the depths of the waters as a witness to the incorruptibility of their bodies and the immortality of their souls.

Three days later, the torturers came to Bishop Peter of Sebastia and recounted their deeds. Bishop Peter gathered the bones of the martyrs and buried them with honour.



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