



**The holy Great Martyr Marina (Margaret)
Whom the Holy Church Celebrates on July 17.**

This Martyr lived during the reign of Claudius II (268-270). She was from Pisidia of Cilicia and was the only daughter of a certain priest of the idols. On being orphaned of her mother, she was handed over to a certain woman who instructed her in the Faith of Christ. When she was fifteen years old, she was apprehended by the ruler Olymbrius, and when asked her name, homeland, and faith, she answered: "My name is Marina; I am the offspring of Pisidia; I call upon the Name of my Lord Jesus Christ." Because of this, she endured bonds, imprisonment, and many whippings, and was finally beheaded in the year 270. Saint Marina is especially invoked for deliverance from demonic possession.

Wine and oil allowed.

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Dismissal Hymn. Fourth Tone

O LORD JESUS, unto Thee Thy lamb doth cry with a loud voice: * O my Bridegroom, Thee I love; and seeking Thee, I now contest, * and with Thy baptism am crucified and buried. * I suffer for Thy sake, that I may reign with Thee; * for Thy sake I die, that I may live in Thee: * accept me out of longing * to Thee as a spotless sacrifice. * Lord, save our souls through her intercessions, since Thou art great in mercy.

Kontakion. Third Tone
On this day the Virgin

WITH most fair virginity * wast thou made comely, O virgin; * and with bright and spotless crowns * wast thou crowned also, O Martyr; * reddened with martyric blood, thou, * O famed Marina, * wast vouchsafed to shine forth brightly with wondrous healings, * while receiving from the right hand * of thy Creator * thy triumph's sacred rewards.



OR†HODOXY OR DEa†H.

Saint Marina the Martyr

“MY LOVE FOR HIS LOVE.”



An ecstatic love sounds from Saint Marina’s lips. Clearly, strongly, she throws down her gauntlet of faith which not only lays the axe to the root of the pagan world, but also lays the foundation of the noetic cornerstone of the New Jerusalem, the Jerusalem above, in this life. The rot of idolatry dissolves, and the virginal purity of the Orthodox Faith appears—as it ever manifests itself— in undimmed clarity, in a life of hope, and in a love which, beginning here, has no end, this love which alone bears the power of an undying life (Heb. 7:16).

Saint Marina, in the fifteenth year of her life, around 270 A.D., answers the Eparch Olymbrios,

“I eagerly give my body to death
for my immortal God and Master,
just as He, the Sinless one, was crucified
for the sake of my love.”

It is to our edification that we take note of one part of the account of her martyrdom.

“My love for His love”: when have we heard of such a thing before? A co-suffering love? A sacrifice freely offered in a response so simple, so childlike? Saint Paul breathes the same love, “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal 2:20). And then, from Carthage, a jailor’s taunt about her birth pangs evokes Saint Perpetua’s trenchant response: “What I am suffering now, I suffer by myself. But then Another will be inside me Who will suffer for me, just as I will be suffering for Him.”

There are three who choose to answer’s Christ’s love with their love.

Saint Dionysius the Areopagite speaks of such an ecstatic love. He writes, “Divine love (ἔρωσις) is ecstatic, not permitting (any) to be lovers of themselves, but of those beloved...Wherefore also Paul the Great, when possessed by the Divine Love, and participating in its ecstatic power, says with inspired lips, ‘I live no longer, but Christ lives in me.’ As a true lover, and beside himself, as he says, to Almighty God, and not living the life of himself, but of the life of the Beloved, as a life excessively esteemed’ ” (*On Divine Names*, 4:13; Parker Vol.1 p.48).

Saint Paul tells his flock that his sufferings for them “fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body’s sake, which is the Church” (Col. 1:24). He yokes his sufferings to the afflictions of Christ, as Christ’s own sufferings. Similarly, we find Ss. Marina and Perpetua not loving themselves. Do they not love the Beloved, by returning His love with their love, and so become divine?

Putting his quill to paper yet again, the Areopagite continues to show us “a more excellent way” (1 Cor. 12:31):

“One might make bold to say even this, on behalf of truth, that the very Author of all things, by the beautiful and good love of everything, through an overflow of Its own loving goodness, becomes out of Itself, by Its providences for all existing things, and is, as it were cozened by goodness and affection and love, and is led down from the Eminence above all, and surpassing all, to being in all as befits an ecstatic superessential power centered in Itself” (*On Divine Names*, 4:13; Parker Vol. 1, PP. 48, 49).

The love of Saint Marina and those like her is likened by Saint Dionysius to the Lord’s “overflow of Its own loving goodness”...to Its... “being all in all as befits an ecstatic superessential power centered in Itself.” Here a creature, a Saint, seeking goodness, creates. Saint Dionysius cries out “that it was through goodness that the superessential Godhead, having fixed all the essences of things being, brought them into being” (*Heavenly Hierarchies* 4:1; Parker Vol. 2, p.17).

Creation by goodness: this is the faith which works through love (cf. Gal.5:6).

St. Isaac tells us: “The man who follows faith straightway becomes a free man and a ruler of himself, and as a son of God with authority he freely wields all things. The man who has found the keys of faith wields all the natures of creation even as God; for by faith comes the authority, after the likeness of God, to create a new creation. ‘Thou didst so will’, he says, ‘and all things were present before Thee’ (cf. Job 23:13 LXX). And many times faith can bring forth all from non-existence” (Homily 52, p. 254).

And further,

“The man whose heart is upheld by the confidence of faith will never be in want; and when he has nothing, he possesses all, as it is written: ‘All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, ye shall receive’ (Mt. 21:22); and again, ‘The Lord is at hand, have care for nothing’ “(Phil. 4:5, 6) (Homily 52, p.254).

In her cry “My love for His love!” Saint Marina believes in the Lord through Whose Compassionate Love her own salvation is wrought. At the time of her martyrdom she had not been baptized. While living in the Christian community in which her father placed her after the death of her mother, she began to nurture in herself a desire for martyrdom.

She was baptized and then perfected in martyrdom in this way:

“He (Olymbrios) then ordered that they strip her naked, hang her on a pole and burn her sides and breast with torches. She endured the torments of pain for a great while, and as she was burned she prayed within, thanking the Lord. After this, they brought a great cauldron in the midst and filled it with water, and taking the martyr down from the pole, tied her securely and dipped her into the cauldron head down that she might drown in the water. But the mindless ones laboured in vain, for as they let her down she cried out, saying: “Lord Jesus Christ, Who didst loosen the bonds of death, and raise the dead, do Thou, O all-powerful One, look down upon Thy hand-maiden and break my bonds, and may this water be unto me for life eternal, and the fulfillment of my desired baptism, that I may be disrobed of the old and corruptible man and clothed with the new and immortal one.”

While she was thus praying they cast her into the vessel of water and immediately there was a great earthquake and the Dove...appeared above the water, holding in its mouth a crown. At the same time the fiery column in the shape of a Cross appeared... The saint came out of the water, for her bonds had been loosened, and she stood with inexpressible joy, glorifying the Most Holy Trinity, and with all her soul, she magnified God, for she had been baptized straightaway by Him according to her desire, and she was enlightened noetically. But not only this wonder happened to the saint, but also another exceptional one; that is, the Dove sat on the head of the martyr, holding the unwithering crown, and it said to her in a voice most sweet: “Peace to thee, hand-maiden of God; have courage, and accept from the right hand of the Most High this heavenly crown.”

“Let us give all, offer all, to Him Who gave Himself a Ransom and Reconciliation for us. But one can give nothing like oneself, embracing the Mystery, and becoming for His sake all that He became for ours.”¹

What peal of thunder can eclipse Saint Marina’s “My love for His love”? She was bound to a pole and plunged headfirst into water, but, at her prayer, the Lord broke her bonds and she emerged from the water recreated, born anew and set free, made whole in body, mind, and spirit. The soldier detailed to slay Saint Marina trembled before her, “and did not dare to lift his sword. She therefore gave him courage and forcibly convinced him and he cut off her head on the seventeenth day of the month of July.” And 15,000 men, not counting the women, joined her in martyrdom on that day. Does not faith, the holy Orthodox

¹ Saint Gregory the Theologian, First Oration, IV-V

Faith, have the power to create new worlds of faith in others, even faith where there was no faith, a new creation in a human heart of faith out of nothing?

“My love for His love!” Where else are these words heard but at the foot of the Cross?. And today the rocks are rent as that cry echoes with resounding peals in the air. “Behold I make all things new” (Rev. 21:5). Yes, Lord, but how so? His reply He lifts not only from Saint Marina’s lips, but also from the lips of all the martyrs of the Twentieth Century, all of whom cry in unison, “My love for His love!” The Chinese Martyrs of the Boxer Rebellion in Beijing, the Royal Martyrs from whose lips Lenin and all the world heard, and still hear, the words, “My love for His love!”; the 30,000,000 Orthodox martyrs in the Gulag of Russia, the 300,000 Serbian Martyrs slain by the Utashi, all bear the Gospel banner aloft so that these divine words may emblazon the skies, “My love for His love!”

Who does not hear this proclamation? “Their sound hath gone forth unto all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (Ps. 18:4 LXX). Who will respond? Are not we accountable for the love that we have received from God? Does not our own Baptism still stir within us? In our Baptism, did we not receive the inflowing of uncreated “living water” (Jn. 4:10), “a well of water springing up into eternal life” (Jn. 4:14). “For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Rom.11:29). God’s gift is never taken back. The gift of “living water” flows within all those who have received Orthodox Baptism. What sound does this water make? “My love for His love.” Does this mean martyrdom? It means what Christ within you asks you to make it mean. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God Which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12, 13).

†HY KNOWLEDGE IS TOO WONDERFUL FOR ME;
IT IS MIGHTY, I CANNOT ATTAIN UNTO IT.
(PS. 138:5)

