



## FROM THE SYNAXARION FOR THE FORTY HOLY MARTYRS OF SEBASTE:

**On the ninth of this month [March], we commemorate the Holy Forty Martyrs, who were martyred in the city of Sebaste.**

These Holy Forty Martyrs came from various lands. All were soldiers under a general, during the reign of Emperor Licinius (308-324). Having been captured then examined on behalf of their Christian faith, first they were bound in chains and fetters and thrown in prison, then they were struck with stones in their faces and mouths. However, when the stones were hurled, they did not come into contact with the Martyrs, but they turned back and struck the ones who threw them. Then on a day when it was cold and very icy, especially in Sebaste where it is distinctly cold, these blessed Martyrs were condemned to be placed naked in the lake of the city. Because one of the forty, due to the weakness of his soul, went to the nearby bath that was lit, and as soon as the heat of the bath hit him he died, one of the guards who was keeping watch outside, seeing this, entered of his own accord into the lake, and by replacing the deserter, he established himself among the Holy Martyrs. He did this for the following reason: When the man who was weak in soul went to the bath, the guard saw a heavenly light that encircled the Holy Martyrs. He simultaneously saw bright crowns over the heads of each one. Only one of them was without a crown.\* At dawn, because the Saints were faint yet alive, their legs were crushed, therefore they delivered their souls into the hands of God, and received the unfading crowns of martyrdom.

There was much desire among the Christians at that time to die for Christ, and they made this manifest. One of the Martyrs among the forty, who was young in age and named Meliton, had not yet died. Therefore the tyrant ordered that his legs not be crushed, but to leave him be, thinking that because he was young and physically strong, he could yet live, and turn from his faith in Christ. Wherefore when his mother saw that he was still alive, she feared that due to his youth and love for life he may give in to fear, and thus be found unworthy of the honor and rank of his fellow soldiers. Standing beside her son, she stretched out her hands, and with signs, glances, and every possible word and way she tried to impart courage and bravery in his heart, saying: "My sweet child, child of the Heavenly Father, endure yet a little more, that you may become a perfect Martyr of Christ. Do not fear the torments, for behold Christ stands by as an invisible helper. Yet a little more my child, and you will receive no more sorrow and no more pain. All the torments have passed, all the terrible things you conquered with your bravery. After these things you will receive joy, pleasure, relaxation, gladness, and good things that you will enjoy, reigning together with Christ, and you will become an intercessor to Him on my behalf, your mother."

When the God-loving mother saw the soldiers placing the relics of the Saints on the wagon, and her son was left behind in the hopes that he may live, for this reason the good and brave mother, thinking that for her son to live would be more of a death, decided despite the weakness of her womanhood, and forgetting the affections of motherhood, lifted her son on her shoulders, and followed behind the wagon with strength of soul. The blessed one made it known that she did not want to see her son alive, but to see him die for Christ. When she saw that her son delivered his soul as he was being carried on the shoulders of his mother, then she felt liberated of her concerns, and danced and leaped for the joyous end of her son. Thus she brought his relic to the place where the other relics of the Saints were, and she placed her beloved child there among the other soldiers, that his body may not be separated from the bodies of the Saints, whose soul she numbered with their souls.\

When the soldiers lit a large fire, they burned the bodies of the Saints. Whatever remained, they threw maliciously into the lake, that they may not be taken by the Christians. But by divine economy, the holy relics came to a bank of the river, therefore they were taken up by the Christians, giving to the Orthodox an inviolate treasure. The Synaxis of these forty is celebrated in their most-holy and martyric Temple near the four bronze pillars.

## **APOLYTIKION**

Together let us honor that holy company united by faith, those noble warriors of the Master of all; they were divinely enlisted for Christ and passed through fire and water. Then they entered into refreshment and pray for those who cry: Glory to Him Who has strengthened you; glory to Him Who has crowned you; glory to Him Who has made you wonderful, O holy Forty Martyrs.

## **KONTAKION**

When you had forsaken every worldly battalion, then you joined yourselves unto the Master in heaven, as the Lord's forty-numbered contenders who won the prize. Having gone through fire and through water, O blessed ones, you worthily received heavenly glory from on high, and a multitude of crowns.