

THE 16th DAY OF THE MONTH OF APRIL
COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLY MARTYRS AGAPE, IRENE & CHIONIA
AT VESPERS

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

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

Incorrupt virginity * and most wondrous martyrdom * did ye bring to Christ, * O honored virgins, * casting down the ungodly arrogance of falsehood * by the power of the Cross * with manly mind. * Wherefore, the whole Church of Christ ** doth celebrate your holy, radiant and renowned memory.

The blessed choirs of the angels * were manifestly astonished * by the suffering of Chionia, * the opposition of Agape * and the invincibility of Irene, * how, having bested the invisible foe * with manly warfare, * they received in abundance ** crowns of victory from the hand of the Bestower of life.

Dying in the fire, * ye extinguished the flame of vainglory * with a mind aflame; * and, keeping the lamp of your souls ever alight, * ye entered with Christ into the bridal-chamber of heaven. * With sparks of miracles * ye have burned up the passions, O passion-bearers, * and with suffering ye have vanquished ** the hordes of the demons.

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

Bedew my mind * with showers of the Most holy Spirit, O most pure one, * who ineffably gaveth birth unto Christ * the drop Who with His compassions washeth away * the countless iniquities of mankind; * dry up the upwelling of my passions, * and grant unto me a torrent * of ever-living nourishment, ** by thy supplications.

Stavrotheotokion: **U**pon beholding Thee, * the Lamb and Shepherd, upon the Tree, * the ewe-lamb who bore Thee lamented, * and maternally exclaimed to Thee: * “O most desired Son, * how is it that Thou art suspended upon the tree of the Cross? * How is it that Thine arms and legs are nailed * by the iniquitous ones, O long-suffering Word, ** and that Thou hast shed Thy blood, O Master?”

AT MATINS

Canon of the holy martyrs, the composition of Joseph, in Tone VIII:

ODE I

Irmos: Let us sing unto the Lord, * who led His people through the Red Sea: * for He alone hath gloriously been glorified.

O martyrs of the Lord, by your mediation obtain grace from heaven for me who praises your splendid triumph on earth.

Having broken the passionate attachment of the bonds of the flesh by the divine Spirit, the virgins bound themselves to Christ with divinely wise love.

With pure works having pleased the Word Who shone forth from the Virgin Maiden, the virgins rejoice therein.

Theotokion: Thou givest birth ineffably to Him Whom the Father ineffably begat, O Sovereign Lady, and thou feedest at thy breast Him Who nourisheth all things.

ODE III

Irmos: O Lord, thou art the confirmation of those who flee to Thee, * Thou art the Light of those in darkness, * and my spirit doth hymn Thee.

Watered by the showers of the divine Spirit, with divine husbandry the virgins produced the grain of martyrdom.

Having loved invisible things more than that which is visible, ye conquered enemies visible and invisible.

Enkindled by the divine fire of the Spirit, ye were not afraid of the fire; wherefore, ye pour forth the divine dew of healings.

Theotokion: Rend asunder the grievous record of my transgressions, O Sovereign Lady who by thy seedless birthgiving hast broken the bonds of Hades!

Sessional Hymn, in Tone VIII: Spec. Mel.: "Of the Wisdom ...":

Betrothing yourselves to the Lord in a divine manner, ye brought to Him your blood and sacrifice as a gift, O passion-bearing maidens, and have worthily received the divine bridal-chamber, unceasingly filled with ineffable enlightenment. Wherefore, we who spiritually keep your honored memory glorify Christ and cry out with faith: Entreat Christ God, that He grant forgiveness of sins to those who honor your holy memory with love!

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

Having conceived the Wisdom and Word in thy womb without being consumed, O Mother of God, thou gavest birth for the world unto the Nourisher of all and Fashioner of creation; and thou didst bear in thine arms Him Who holdeth all things. Wherefore, I beseech thee, O all-holy Virgin, and glorify thee with faith: May I be delivered from transgressions, and, on the day of judgment when I shall stand before the face of my Creator, O pure Virgin Sovereign Lady, grant me thine aid; for thou canst do all things whatsoever thou dost will, O thou who art all-hymned.

Stavrotheotokion: Upon beholding the Lamb, Shepherd and Redeemer * upon the Cross, * the ewe-lamb exclaimed weeping, bitterly lamenting, and crying aloud: * “The world rejoiceth, having received deliverance through Thee, * but my womb doth burn, beholding Thy crucifixion, * which Thou hast endured in Thy merciful loving-kindness. * O long-suffering Lord, * Thou abyss and inexhaustible well-spring of mercy, * take pity, and grant forgiveness of sins ** unto those who hymn Thy divine sufferings with faith!”

ODE IV

Irmos: O Lord, I have heard the mystery of Thy dispensation; * I have considered Thy works, * and I have glorified Thy Divinity.

Estranging themselves from carnal desires through divine desire, the virgins of Christ became habitations of the Spirit.

Arraying yourselves against the adversary with divinely wise consent, ye received a divine victory and have been deemed worthy of divine crowns.

Like innocent lambs were ye led forth in sanctity to be slaughtered, O most honored ones, neither crying out nor protesting, but slain of your own volition.

Theotokion: O all-holy Sovereign Lady, thou hast given birth to the Lord of all creation, in the flesh, Whom do thou beseech, that He deliver me from the province of the enemy’s machinations.

ODE V

Irmos: Illumine us O Lord with Thy commandments, * and with Thine arm raised on high * grant us Thy peace, * O Lover of mankind!

Together ye rose early unto Christ, the never-waning Light, O divinely wise virgins, and were illumined more than the radiance of the sun.

Ye manfully gave your members over to tortures, thereby tormenting the tyrant by your patience, O right wondrous passion-bearers.

Ye were shown to be sacred flowers of the martyrs, O all-praised ones, imparting to the Church the sweet fragrance of divine understanding.

By your words was the boastful one struck dumb; and by your patience was he vanquished and sent forth to damnation, O all-praised ones.

Theotokion: O Maiden, pray thou that I attain a blessed end, that I may escape the endless torments! which await me and find salvation.

ODE VI

Irmos: I will pour out my prayer unto the Lord, * and to Him will I proclaim my grief; * for my soul is filled with evils, * and my life unto Hades hath drawn nigh, * and like Jonah I pray unto Thee: * Raise me up from corruption, O God.

Having manfully endured pain of the flesh and fiery torment, Agape, Chionia and Irene, the passion-bearers and brides of Christ, received magnificent crowns and never-fading glory with the martyrs.

Drugged across the ground like stones, O virgins, with the power of the Word ye demolished the whole edifice of falsehood and have been led up into the holy Church, to stand with joy before Him Who hath dominion over all creation.

The shrine of Chionia, Irene and Agape, abundantly watered by the well-spring of the Comforter, poureth forth healings, bringeth an end to pain and watereth with grace the hearts of those who approach with piety.

Theotokion: Adam hath shed the mortality of his garments of skin through the incarnation of thy Son, O Virgin Theotokos, and hath clothed himself in the vesture of divine glory, glorifying thee with joy as the all-immaculate Mother of God.

Kontakion of the holy martyrs, in Tone IV:

Thou didst mightily arm thy soul with faith, O Irene, * manifestly putting the evil one to shame, * leading to Christ a myriad multitude of people, O blessed one; * and, wearing a robe empurpled by thy blood, ** thou now rejoicest with the angels.

ODE VII

Irmos: **The Hebrew children in the furnace * boldly trampled upon the flames, * changing the fire into dew, they cried aloud: * ‘Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, throughout the ages’.**

Neither exposure to wild beasts, nor the raging assault of flickering fire, nor the severing of their members, nor multifarious pains, frightened the valiant-minded maidens of Christ.

Directing the eyes of their heart toward God, the King Who saveth, the ewe-lambs of Christ advanced upon the whole legion of the enemy and manfully vanquished them.

Be Thou merciful to Thy servants, O Supremely good One, through the entreaties of the pure Irene and Chionia and the honored Agape, for their sake granting us forgiveness of sins.

Setting all your desire upon the one Master, O virgins, ye considered the beauty of life to be but a dream, crying aloud: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God, throughout the ages!

Theotokion: Slay thou the sin which liveth within me, O pure one, and grant unto me the life which ageeth not, in that thou hast given birth to the Life Who hath slain the wicked serpent.

ODE VIII

Irmos: **Treading down the fiery flame in the furnace, * the divinely eloquent children sang: * ‘Bless the Lord, ye works of the Lord’.**

Having most gloriously learned divine things, the ewe-lambs of Christ were imbued during their struggles with a manly character, suffering steadfastly.

Darkened by the drunkenness of the darkness of sin, the tyrant was shown to be a subject of derision, but the virgins of Christ were shown to be radiant.

The virgin maidens were truly shown to be flutes, manifestly sounding forth the divine hymn of godly confession, witness and faith.

Made steadfast by the love of the Master, ye cast down all the foundations of the devil, O passion-bearers of Christ, and are now called blessed.

Theotokion: The furnace of old, presenting an image of thy birthgiving, did not consume the youths, O Virgin Mother, just as the divine Fire did not burn thy womb.

ODE IX

Irmos: Saved by thee, O pure Virgin, * we confess thee to be truly the Theotokos, * and together with the choirs of the bodiless hosts * thee do we magnify.

Ye were guided to the divine havens by the helmsmanship of Christ our God, passing over the savage waves of perils.

Shining like stars and lamps, Irene, Agape and Chionia richly illumine all the ends of the world.

Ye have joined the choirs of the incorporeal ones, O passion-bearers, valiantly conquering the incorporeal foe with your flesh.

Your memory, resplendent with divine and radiant gifts, O passion-bearers, doth enlighten the thoughts of those who praise thee.

Theotokion: O right loving Virgin, who gavest birth to the supremely good Word, heal thou my soul which hath been afflicted by sin.