

Through the prayers of our holy fathers and mother, O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us. Amen.

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, everywhere present and filling all things. Treasury of Blessings, and Giver of Life, come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One!

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (3x)

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. O Lord, cleanse us from our sins. O Master, pardon our transgressions. O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities, for Your Name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (3x) Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Lord, have mercy. (3x) Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Come, let us worship God our King.

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God.

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and our God.

PSALM 8

The glory of the Lord in creation

O Lord, our Lord, how wonderful is Your Name in all the earth, for You have exalted Your glory above the heavens.

Out of the mouths of babies and infants

You have perfected praise because of Your enemies, to destroy the enemy and the avenger.

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For I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
the moon and the stars that You have established.
What is man that You are mindful of him,
or the son of man that You visit him?
Yet You have made him a little lower than the angles,
and crowned him with glory and honor.
You have given him dominion over the works of Your hands,
and put all things under his feet,
all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
and whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
O Lord, our Lord, how wonderful is Your Name in all the earth.

PRAYERS FOR SUNDAY OF THE CROSS

By Your Cross You destroyed death, to the thief You have opened Paradise, for the myrrh-bearing women You have changed lamentation into joy, and commanded to announce to Your apostles that You are risen from the dead, O Christ our God, granting to the world great mercy.

O Lord, save Your people, and bless Your inheritance, grant victory to the Orthodox Christians over their adversaries, and by the virtue of Your Cross, preserve Your habitation.

Through the sufferings which Your holy forty martyrs endured for Your sake, O Lord, we beseech You, O Lover of mankind, heal all of our infirmities.

The dominion of death can no longer hold men captive, for Christ descended, shattering and destroying its powers. Hell is bound, while the prophets rejoice and cry, "The Savior has come to those in faith. Enter, you faithful, into the Resurrection."

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

You abandoned all earthly armies, cleaving to the heavenly Master, O forty martyrs of the Lord. Having passed through fire and water, O blessed ones, you have fittingly received heavenly glory and many crowns.

Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Now the flaming sword no longer guards the gates of Paradise. It has been mysteriously quenched by the Wood of the Cross. The sting of death and the victory of hell have been vanquished, for You, O my Savior, came and cried to those in hell, “Enter again into Paradise.”

PRAYERS TO END THE PANDEMIC OF CORONAVIRUS

Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.

O God Almighty, Lord of heaven and earth, and of all creation visible and invisible: In Your inexpressible goodness, look down upon us, Your people gathered in Your Holy Name. Be our helper and defender in this day of affliction, for You know all our weaknesses and hear our cry in repentance and contrition of heart. O loving Lord, deliver us from the impending threat of the coronavirus. Send Your angel to watch over us and protect us. Grant health and recovery to those suffering from this virus. Guide the hands of the physicians and heal Your servants through them. Grant wisdom to those who are working on the vaccine for this virus. And preserve those who are healthy. Enable us to continue to serve our suffering brothers and sisters in peace that together we may glorify Your most honorable and majestic Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.

O Lord Jesus Christ, in Your loving care, You traveled through towns and villages healing every disease and sickness, and at Your command, the sick were made well: Yourself now come to our aid, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus, and grant us to experience the miracle Your healing love.

Comfort the families of those who are sick or have died. May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care. And as they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair.

Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbors from helping one another.

Guide the hands of the doctors and nurses and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the

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process. And impart Your wisdom on the researchers working on the vaccine for coronavirus.

Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim immunity to a disease that knows no boundaries. Instill the fear of You in the leaders of our nation and other nations of the world. Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve. Give them the wisdom to invest in long-term solutions that will help prepare for or prevent future outbreaks.

O Master and Lord, our Savior, Healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow. Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, stay with us as we patiently endure and mourn, persist and prepare.

For You are a merciful and loving God, and to You we give glory, to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

PRAYER FOR DOCTORS AND NURSES

O Lord Jesus Christ our God, Lover of mankind, Physician of our souls and bodies, You endured the pain of our infirmities, and by Your wounds we are healed. You gave sight to the man born blind and straightened the woman who was bent over for 18 years. You gave speech and sight to the mute man who was possessed by demons. You not only forgave the paralyzed man his sins, but healed him to walk. You restored the withered hand of a man in the synagogue and stopped the flow of blood of a woman who bled for 12 years. You raised Jairus' daughter back to life and resurrected Lazarus who was dead four days. You heal every infirmity under the sun: Yourself now, O Lord, grant Your grace to all the doctors, nurses, physicians, and researchers, who have labored and studied hour upon hour, to go into all the world, and also to heal by the talent You have given to each of them. Strengthen them by Your strength, that they may not fear evil or disease. Enlighten them to do no evil by the works of their hands, and preserve them and those they serve in peace. For You are our God, and to You we give glory together with Your Father, Who has no beginning, and Your Most Holy, Good, and Life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

DAILY SCRIPTURE READINGS

Hebrews 4:14-5:6

¹⁴ Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. **5** ¹ Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; ³ and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. ⁴ And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was. ⁵ So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”; ⁶ as he says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Mark 8:34-9:1

The Lord said, "If any want to become My followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for My sake, and for the sake of the Gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the Kingdom of God has come in power."

SAINT OF THE DAY

40 Holy Martyrs of Sebaste

In the year 313 Saint Constantine the Great issued an edict granting

Christians religious freedom, and officially recognizing Christianity as equal with paganism under the law. But his co-ruler Licinius was a pagan, and he decided to stamp out Christianity in his part of the Empire. As Licinius prepared his army to fight Constantine, he decided to remove Christians from his army, fearing mutiny.

One of the military commanders of that time in the Armenian city of Sebaste was Agricola, a zealous champion of idolatry. Under his command was a company of forty Cappadocians, brave soldiers who had distinguished themselves in many battles. When these Christian soldiers refused to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods, Agricola locked them up in prison. The soldiers occupied themselves with prayer and psalmody, and during the night they heard a voice saying, “Persevere until the end, then you shall be saved.”

On the following morning, the soldiers were again taken to Agricola. This time the pagan tried flattery. He began to praise their valor, their youth and strength, and once more he urged them to renounce Christ and thereby win themselves the respect and favor of their emperor.

Seven days later, the renowned judge Licius arrived at Sebaste and put the soldiers on trial. The saints steadfastly answered, “Take not only our military insignia, but also our lives, since nothing is more precious to us than Christ God.” Licius then ordered his servants to stone the holy martyrs. But the stones missed the saints and returned to strike those who had thrown them. One stone thrown by Licius hit Agricola in the face, smashing his teeth. The torturers realized that the saints were guarded by some invisible power. In prison, the soldiers spent the night in prayer and again they heard the voice of the Lord comforting them: “He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live (*John 11:25*). Be brave and fear not, for you shall obtain imperishable crowns.”

On the following day the judge repeated the interrogation in front of the torturer, but the soldiers remained unyielding.

It was winter, and there was a severe frost. They lined up the holy soldiers, threw them into a lake near the city, and set a guard to prevent them from coming out of the water. In order to break the will of the martyrs, a warm bath-house was set up on the shore. During the first hour of the

night, when the cold had become unbearable, one of the soldiers made a dash for the bath-house, but no sooner had he stepped over the threshold, then he fell down dead.

During the third hour of the night, the Lord sent consolation to the martyrs. Suddenly there was light, the ice melted away, and the water in the lake became warm. All the guards were asleep, except for Aglaius, who was keeping watch. Looking at the lake he saw that a radiant crown had appeared over the head of each martyr. Aglaius counted thirty-nine crowns and realized that the soldier who fled had lost his crown.

Aggias then woke up the other guards, took off his uniform and said to them, “I too am a Christian,” and he joined the martyrs. Standing in the water he prayed, “Lord God, I believe in You, in Whom these soldiers believe. Add me to their number, and make me worthy to suffer with Your servants.” Then a fortieth crown appeared over his head.

In the morning, the torturers saw with surprise that the martyrs were still alive, and their guard Aggias was glorifying Christ together with them. They led the soldiers out of the water and broke their legs. During this horrible execution the mother of the youngest of the soldiers, Meliton, pleaded with her son to persevere until death.

They put the bodies of the martyrs on a cart and committed them to fire. Young Meliton was still breathing, and they left him on the ground. His mother then picked up her son, and on her own shoulders she carried him behind the cart. When Meliton drew his last breath, his mother put him on the cart with the bodies of his fellow sufferers. The bodies of the saints were tossed in the fire, and their charred bones were thrown into the water, so that Christians would not gather them up.

Three days later the martyrs appeared in a dream to Saint Peter, Bishop of Sebaste, and commanded him to bury their remains. The bishop together with several clergy gathered up the relics of the glorious martyrs by night and buried them with honor.

There is a pious custom of baking “skylarks” (pastries shaped like skylarks) on this day, because people believed that birds sing at this time to announce the arrival of spring. Forty “skylarks” are prepared in honor of the

Forty Martyrs.

The names of the forty martyrs are: Cyrion (or Quirio), Candidus, Domnus, Hesychius, Heraclius, Smaragdus, Eunocius (Or Eunicus), Valens, Vivianus, Claudius, Priscus, Theodulus, Eutychius, John, Xanthius, Helianus, Sisinius, Aggias, Aetius, Flavius, Acacius, Ecdicius, Lysimachus, Alexander, Elias, Gorgonius, Theophilus, Dometian, Gaius, Leontuis, Athanasius, Cyril, Sacerdon, Nicholas, Valerius, Philoctimon, Severian, Chudion, Aglaius, and Meliton.

TWO PRAYERS TO SAINT THEPHYLACTUS

Troparion

Together let us honor the 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 praying 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

You abandoned all earthly armies,
cleaving to the heavenly Master, O Forty Martyrs of the Lord.
Having passed through fire and water, O Blessed Ones,
you have fittingly received heavenly glory and many crowns.

CONCLUDING PRAYERS

It is truly meet to bless you, O Theotokos, ever-blessed and most pure, and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, without corruption you gave birth to God the Word. True Theotokos we magnify you.

Through the prayers of our holy fathers and mother, O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us. Amen.