



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

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life! (3x)

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 51 (50 LXX)  
*A prayer of repentance*

Have mercy on me, O God, in Your great mercy,  
and in the abundance of Your compassions  
blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my lawlessness,  
and cleanse me from my sin.  
For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is always before me.  
Against You alone have I sinned,  
and done evil before You,  
so that You are justified in Your words  
and victorious in Your judgment.  
For, behold, I was conceived in iniquity,  
and in sin my mother gave birth to me.  
For, behold, You love truth,  
You revealed to me the unknown  
and secret things of Your wisdom.  
Sprinkle me with hyssop, and I will be cleansed.  
Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.  
Make me to hear joy and gladness,  
let the bones that You have humbled rejoice.  
Turn Your face away from my sins,  
and blot out all my transgressions.  
Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right Spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from Your presence,  
and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,  
and establish me with Your guiding Spirit.  
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,  
and sinners will return to You.  
Rescue me from bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation,  
and my tongue will rejoice at Your righteousness.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise,  
for if You had desired sacrifice, I would have given it,  
You will not take pleasure in whole burnt offerings.  
The sacrifice to God is a broken spirit,  
a broken and humbled heart God will not despise.  
Do good, O Lord, to Zion, in Your good pleasure,  
and let the walls of Jerusalem be rebuilt.  
Then You will be pleased with the sacrifice of righteousness,  
with offerings and whole-burnt offerings,  
then bulls will be offered on Your altar.

*Vespers Aposticha of Wednesday of the third week of Pascha*

Save me, O Christ Savior, by the power of the Cross, as You once saved Peter in the sea, and have mercy on me, O God.

*Verse:* To You have I lifted up my eyes, for You dwell in heaven. Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hands of their masters, as the eyes of the handmaid look to the hands of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, until He has mercy on us.

With the Archangels let us hymn the Resurrection of Christ. For He is the Redeemer and the Savior of our souls, and He is coming again with great glory and mighty power to judge the world which He has fashioned.

*Verse:* Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us, for greatly are we filled with abasement. Greatly has our soul been filled with it. Let reproach come upon them that prosper, and abasement on the proud.

The choirs of the martyrs withstood the tyrants, saying, “We have been enlisted by the King of hosts. Even should you destroy us with fire and torments, we will not deny the might of the Trinity.”

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

Joseph asked for the Body of Jesus and laid it in his own new tomb. For it was right that He should come out from the grave, as from a bridal

chamber. O Lord, You have crushed the might of death and opened the gates of Paradise to mankind, glory to You.

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

#### *Acts 8:18-25*

<sup>18</sup> Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, <sup>19</sup> saying, "Give me also this power so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." <sup>20</sup> But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain God's gift with money! <sup>21</sup> You have no part or share in this, for your heart is not right before God. <sup>22</sup> Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. <sup>23</sup> For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and the chains of wickedness." <sup>24</sup> Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may happen to me."

<sup>25</sup> Now after Peter and John had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news to many villages of the Samaritans.

#### *John 6:35-39*

<sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. <sup>36</sup> But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup> Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; <sup>38</sup> for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup> And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

### 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.

**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 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.

#### SAINT OF THE DAY

##### *Great-martyr, Victory-bearer, and Wonderworker George*

The Holy Great-martyr George, was a native of Cappadocia (a district in Asia Minor), and he grew up in a deeply believing Christian family. His father was martyred for Christ when George was still a child. His mother, owning lands in Palestine, moved there with her son and raised him in strict piety.

When he became a man, George entered into the service of the Roman army. He was handsome, brave and valiant in battle, and he came to the notice of the emperor Diocletian (284-305) and joined the imperial guard

with the rank of military commander.

The pagan emperor, who did much for the restoration of Roman power, was clearly concerned with the danger presented to pagan civilization by the triumph of the Crucified Savior, and intensified his persecution against the Christians in the final years of his reign. Following the advice of the Senate at Nicomedia, Diocletian gave all his governors full freedom in their court proceedings against Christians, and he promised them his full support.

George, when he heard the decision of the emperor, distributed all his wealth to the poor, freed his servants, and then appeared in the Senate. The brave soldier of Christ spoke out openly against the emperor's designs. He confessed himself a Christian, and appealed to all to acknowledge Christ, "I am a servant of Christ, my God, and trusting in Him, I have come among you voluntarily, to bear witness concerning the Truth."

"What is Truth?" one of the dignitaries asked, echoing the question of Pontius Pilate. The saint replied, "Christ Himself, Whom you persecuted, is Truth."

Stunned by the bold speech of the valiant warrior, the emperor, who had loved and promoted George, attempted to persuade him not to throw away his youth and glory and honors, but rather to offer sacrifice to the gods as was the Roman custom. The confessor replied, "Nothing in this unpredictable life can weaken my resolve to serve God."

Then by order of the enraged emperor the armed guards began to push George out of the assembly hall with their spears, and they then led him off to prison. But the deadly steel became soft and it bent, just as the spears touched the saint's body, and it caused him no harm. In prison they put the martyr's feet in stocks and placed a heavy stone on his chest.

The next day at the interrogation, powerless but firm of spirit, George again answered the emperor, "You will grow tired of tormenting me sooner than I will tire of being tormented by you." Then Diocletian gave orders to subject George to some very intense tortures. They tied the Great-martyr to a wheel, beneath which were boards pierced with sharp pieces of iron. As the wheel turned, the sharp edges slashed the saint's naked body.

At first the sufferer loudly cried out to the Lord, but soon he quieted

down, and did not utter even a single groan. Diocletian decided that the tortured one was already dead, and he gave orders to remove the battered body from the wheel, and then went to a pagan temple to offer thanks.

At this very moment it got dark, thunder boomed, and a voice was heard, "Fear not, George, for I am with you." Then a wondrous light shone, and at the wheel an angel of the Lord appeared in the form of a radiant youth. He placed his hand upon the martyr, saying to him, "Rejoice!" George stood up healed.

When the soldiers led him to the pagan temple where the emperor was, the emperor could not believe his own eyes and he thought that he saw before him some other man or even a ghost. In confusion and in terror the pagans looked George over carefully, and they became convinced that a miracle had occurred. Many then came to believe in the Life-giving God of the Christians.

Two illustrious officials, Anatolius and Protoleon, who were secretly Christians, openly confessed Christ. Immediately, without a trial, they were beheaded with the sword by order of the emperor. Also present in the pagan temple was Empress Alexandra, the wife of Diocletian, and she also knew the truth. She was on the point of glorifying Christ, but one of the servants of the emperor took her and led her off to the palace.

The emperor became even more furious. He had not lost all hope of influencing George, so he gave him over to new torments. After throwing him into a deep pit, they covered it over with lime. Three days later they dug him out, but found him cheerful and unharmed. They shod the saint in iron sandals with red-hot nails, and then drove him back to the prison with whips. In the morning, they led him back to the interrogation, cheerful and with healed feet, and the emperor asked if he liked his shoes. The saint said that the sandals had been just his size. Then they beat him with ox thongs until pieces of his flesh came off and his blood soaked the ground, but the brave sufferer, strengthened by the power of God, remained unyielding.

The emperor concluded that the saint was being helped by magic, so he summoned the sorcerer Athanasius to deprive the saint of his miraculous powers, or else poison him. The sorcerer gave George two goblets

containing drugs. One of them would have quieted him, and the other would kill him. The drugs had no effect, and the saint continued to denounce the pagan superstitions and glorify God as before.

When the emperor asked what sort of power was helping him, George said, “Do not imagine that it is any human learning which keeps me from being harmed by these torments. I am saved only by calling upon Christ and His Power. Whoever believes in Him has no regard for tortures and is able to do the things that Christ did” (*John 14:12*). Diocletian asked what sort of things Christ had done. The Martyr replied, “He gave sight to the blind, cleansed the lepers, healed the lame, gave hearing to the deaf, cast out demons, and raised the dead.”

Knowing that they had never been able to resurrect the dead through sorcery, nor by any of the gods known to him, and wanting to test the saint, the emperor commanded him to raise up a dead person before his eyes. The saint retorted, “You wish to tempt me, but my God will work this sign for the salvation of the people who will see the power of Christ.”

When they led George down to the graveyard, he cried out, “O Lord! Show to those here present, that You are the only God in all the world. Let them know You as the Almighty Lord.” Then the earth quaked, a grave opened, the dead one emerged from it alive. Having seen with their own eyes the Power of Christ, the people wept and glorified the true God.

The sorcerer Athanasius, falling down at the feet of George, confessed Christ as the All-Powerful God and asked forgiveness for his sins, committed in ignorance. The stubborn emperor in his impiety thought otherwise. In a rage, he commanded both Athanasius and the man raised from the dead to be beheaded, and he had George again locked up in prison.

The people, weighed down with their infirmities, began to visit the prison and they there received healing and help from the saint. A certain farmer named Glycerius, whose ox had collapsed, also visited him. The saint consoled him and assured him that God would restore his ox to life. When he saw the ox alive, the farmer began to glorify the God of the Christians throughout all the city. By order of the emperor, Glycerius was arrested and beheaded.

The exploits and the miracles of the Great-martyr George had increased the number of the Christians, therefore Diocletian made a final attempt to compel the saint to offer sacrifice to the idols. They set up a court at the pagan temple of Apollo. On the final night the holy martyr prayed fervently, and as he slept, he saw the Lord, Who raised him up with His hand, and embraced him. The Savior placed a crown on George's head and said, "Fear not, but have courage, and you will soon come to Me and receive what has been prepared for you."

In the morning, the emperor offered to make George his co-administrator, second only to himself. The holy martyr with a feigned willingness answered, "Caesar, you should have shown me this mercy from the very beginning, instead of torturing me. Let us go now to the temple and see the gods you worship."

Diocletian believed that the martyr was accepting his offer, and he followed him to the pagan temple with his retinue and all the people. Everyone was certain that George would offer sacrifice to the gods. The saint went up to the idol, made the sign of the Cross and addressed it as if it were alive, "Are you the one who wants to receive from me sacrifice befitting God?"

The demon inhabiting the idol cried out, "I am not a god and none of those like me is a god, either. The only God is He Whom you preach. We are fallen angels, and we deceive people because we are jealous."

George cried out, "How dare you remain here, when I, the servant of the true God, have entered?" Then noises and wailing were heard from the idols, and they fell to the ground and were shattered.

There was general confusion. In a frenzy, pagan priests and many of the crowd seized the holy martyr, tied him up, and began to beat him. They also called for his immediate execution.

The holy empress Alexandra tried to reach him. Pushing her way through the crowd, she cried out, "O God of George, help me, for You Alone are All-Powerful." At the feet of the Great-martyr the holy empress confessed Christ, Who had humiliated the idols and those who worshipped them.

Diocletian immediately pronounced the death sentence on the Great-

martyr George and the holy Empress Alexandra, who followed George to execution without resisting. Along the way she felt faint and slumped against a wall. There she surrendered her soul to God.

George gave thanks to God and prayed that he would also end his life in a worthy manner. At the place of execution, the saint prayed that the Lord would forgive the torturers who acted in ignorance, and that He would lead them to the knowledge of Truth. Calmly and bravely, the holy Great-martyr George bent his neck beneath the sword, receiving the crown of martyrdom on April 23, 303.

The pagan era was coming to an end, and Christianity was about to triumph. Within ten years, holy Emperor Constantine would issue the Edict of Milan, granting religious freedom to Christians.

Saint George is known as Victory-bearer, not only for his military achievements, but for successfully enduring martyrdom. Saint George was the patron saint and protector of several of the great builders of the Russian state. Saint Vladimir's son, Yaroslav the Wise (in holy Baptism George), advanced the veneration of the saint in the Russian Church. He built the city of Yuriev [i.e., "of Yurii." "Yurii" is the diminutive of "George", as "Ivan" is of "John"], he also founded the Yuriev monastery at Novgorod, and built a church of Saint George the Victory-bearer at Kiev.

The day of the consecration of Saint George's Church in Kiev, November 26, 1051 by Saint Hilarion, Metropolitan of Kiev and all Rus, has entered into the liturgical treasury of the Church as a special church feastday. Yuriev Day is beloved by the Russian people as an "autumn Feast of Saint George."

The name of Saint George was also borne by the founder of Moscow, Yurii Dolgoruky (+ 1157), who was the builder of many churches dedicated to Saint George, and the builder of the city of Yuriev-Polsk. In the year 1238 the heroic fight of the Russian nation against the Mongol Horde was led by the Great Prince Yurii (George) Vsevolodovich of Vladimir, who fell at the Battle at the Sita River. His memory, like that of Igor the Brave, and defender of his land, was celebrated in Russian spiritual poems and ballads.

The first Great Prince of Moscow, when Moscow had become the center of the Russian Land, was Yurii Danilovich (+ 1325), the son of Saint Daniel

of Moscow, and grandson of Saint Alexander Nevsky. From that time Saint George the Victory-bearer, depicted as a horseman slaying the serpent, appeared on Moscow's coat of arms, and became an emblem of the Russian state. This has strengthened Russia's connections with Christian nations, and especially with Georgia, the Land of Saint George.

**TROPARION AND KONTAKION OF SAINT GEORGE**

*Troparion*

You were bound for good deeds, O martyr of Christ, George,  
by faith you conquered the torturer's godlessness.  
You were offered as a sacrifice pleasing to God.  
Thus you received the crown of victory.  
Through your intercessions, forgiveness of sins is granted to all.

*Kontakion*

God raised you as his own gardener, O George,  
for you have gathered for yourself the sheaves of virtue.  
Having sown in tears, you now reap with joy.  
You shed your blood in combat and won Christ as your crown.  
Through your intercessions, forgiveness of sins is granted to all.

**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.

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

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life! (3x)

