

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

On "Lord, I have cried ...", these stichera, in Tone I:

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 ..., Now & ever ..., Theotokion:

Bedew thou my mind * with the outpourings of the all-holy Spirit, * O all-pure one, who gavest birth to Christ, * the Drop of rain Who by His compassions hath washed away * the immeasurably countless iniquities of men. * Dry up the spring of my passions, * and by thy supplications * ever vouchsafe unto me * the food of life.

Stavrotheotokion: **W**hen she beheld Thee, * the Lamb and Shepherd, upon the Tree, * the ewe-lamb who gave Thee birth lamented * and exclaimed to Thee maternally: * "O my Son most desired, * how is it that Thou art suspended upon the tree of the Cross, O Long-suffering One? * How is it that Thy feet and hands have been pierced with nails * by the iniquitous? * How hast Thou shed Thy blood, O Master?"

AT MATINS

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

ODE I

Irmos: Let us chant unto the Lord, Who led His people across 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 praise 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 Mistress, and thou feedest at thy breast Him Who nourisheth all things.

ODE III

Irmos: Thou art the confirmation of those who have recourse to Thee, O Lord, Thou art the light of the benighted; 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 Mistress who by thy seedless birthgiving hast broken the bonds of he I!

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

Betrothing yourselves to the Lord in manner divine, 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 remission of sins to those who honor your holy memory with love!

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., Theotokion:

Conceiving the Wisdom and Word of God in thy womb without being consumed, O Mother of God, thou gavest birth to Him Who sustaineth the world, didst hold in thine arms Him Who holdeth all things, the Nurturer of all and Author of creation. Wherefore, I beseech thee, O most holy Virgin, and faithfully glorify thee, that I be delivered from my transgressions. And on the day of judgment, when I will stand before the face of my Creator, do thou then grant me thine aid, O pure Virgin Mistress; for all things whatsoever thou desirest, thou canst do, O most hymned one.

Stavrotheotokion: **T**he ewe-lamb, beholding the Lamb, Shepherd and Deliverer upon the Cross, exclaimed, weeping, and bitterly lamenting, cried out: "The world rejoiceth, receiving deliverance through Thee, but my womb doth burn, beholding Thy crucifixion, which Thou endurest in the loving-kindness of Thy mercy. O long-suffering Lord, Thou abyss and inexhaustible well-spring of mercy, take pity and grant remission of transgressions unto those who hymn Thy divine sufferings with faith!"

ODE IV

Irmos: **I** have heard, O Lord, the mystery of Thy dispensation; I have understood Thy works, and 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 vouchsafed 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** most holy Lady, thou gavest birth to the Lord of all creation, incarnate, Whom do thou beseech, that He deliver me from the province of the enemy's machinations.

ODE V

Irmos: **I**lluminate us by Thy precepts, O Lord, and with Thine upraised arm grant us Thy peace, O Thou Who lovest mankind.

Together ye rose early unto Christ, the never-waning Light, O divinely wise virgins, and were illumined more than by 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 the sacred flower of the martyrs, O most lauded 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** shall pour forth my prayer unto the Lord, and to Him will I declare my grief; for my soul hath been filled with evils, and my life hath drawn nigh unto hell. And like Jonah I pray: Lead 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 most immaculate Mother of God.

Kontakion, in Tone IV:

Thou didst mightily arm thy soul with faith, O Irene, manifestly putting the evil one to shame, and didst lead to Christ myriad multitudes of men, O blessed ones; 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 the flame underfoot and transformed the fire into dew, crying: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God, forever!**

Neither exposure to wild beasts, nor the raging assault of lambent 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 vanquished them manfully.

Be Thou merciful to Thy servants, O All-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, forever!

Theotokion: Slay thou the sin which liveth within me, O pure one, and vouchsafe unto me the life which ageeth not, in that thou gavest birth to the Life Who slew the serpent.

ODE VIII

Irmos: **Trampling the flame and the fire underfoot in the furnace, the divinely eloquent children chanted: Bless the Lord, ye works of the Lord!**

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

Benighted by the drunkenness of the darkness of sin, the tyrant was shown to be a laughing-stock, 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: **T**he 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: **S**aved by thee, O pure virgin, we truly confess thee to be the Theotokos, magnifying thee with the incorporeal choirs.

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 all-good Word, heal thou my soul which hath been afflicted by sin.