

THE 2nd DAY OF THE MONTH OF DECEMBER
(AND THE 12th DAY OF THE MONTH OF JUNE)
COMMEMORATION OF THE VENERABLE
JOHN, HERACLEMON, ANDREW AND THEOPHILUS OF EGYPT
AT VESPERS

At "Lord, I have cried ...," these stichera, in Tone VIII,
Spec. Mel: "O most glorious wonder ...":

Oh, wondrous life! * Oh, great endurance! * Right fruitful trees of paradise * which flourished in the desert, * sprung from a single root * and grafted onto the one true Vine, * O John, Heraclemon, Andrew and Theophilus, * fill ye with the sweetness of spiritual fruit * us that honor and hymn thee.

Enduring the noonday sun in the desert, * ye freed yourselves from the burning heat of the passions, * and by your thirst for salvation * overcoming natural thirst, * ye discovered a fountain overflowing unto eternal life * and gave drink to your souls with the streams thereof. Wherefore, by your supplications * bedew our desiccated souls, * vouchsafing us to bring forth the fruitfulness of the virtues.

Emulators of the Forerunner * and imitators of the feats of Elijah, * offspring of the desert, * glory and adornment of fasters, * by your life did ye amaze the bodiless ones. * Wherefore, ye have become fellow citizens with the bodiless; * and now, therefore, from heaven watch over them that struggle spiritually * and show them speedy aid, * guiding them to the eternal mansions.

Glory ..., in Tone VII:

Laying aside today all the cares of life, come ye, let us make haste to the temple of the Lord, celebrating the radiant memory of the venerable ones; and well instructed in their life, let us purify our senses and sanctify our lips with prayer; and sighing over our offenses from the depths of our hearts, let us cry out to our Savior, Jesus most sweet: By their prayers, O Christ God, have mercy upon us!

At the Aposticha, Glory ..., in Tone V:

With what praises shall we honor you, O venerable ones? What hymns shall we sing to you, who from your youth gave your life over to Christ, and emulated the feats of him that is the greatest of them that have been born of woman? The mind is not able, and every tongue that speaketh boastful words falleth silent, yet our hearts are inflamed all the more with eagerness; wherefore, we entreat you, instead of hymns accept our faith and love.

Troparion, in Tone IV:

O God of our fathers, deal ever with us according to Thy gentleness; take not Thy mercy from us, but by their supplications direct our life in peace.

AT MATINS

The Canon of the Venerable Ones, the acrostic whereof is: "We glorify your holy memory, O Venerable Ones," in Tone VIII:

ODE I

Irmos: Once, the wonderworking staff of Moses drowned Pharaoh, the chariot-mounted tyrant, having struck the sea in the form of a cross and parted it; and it saved Israel that fled on foot chanting a hymn unto God.

Behold now, what is so good or so joyous as for brethren to dwell together in unity? Attentive to this divinely inspired word, and working out your salvation together, ye did persist in prayers and labors in singleness of mind, chanting with one mouth and one heart unto the Trinity, consubstantial and undivided.

Purchasing that which is eternal with that which is transient and corruptible, ye did bring about a blessed exchange in your earthly life; for, lo! ye took up labors and struggle, that ye might obtain heavenly rest; ye loved the desert, that ye might delight in the garden of paradise; ye bare the burning heat of noonday, that ye might abide eternally in a place of refreshing; and hunger and thirst did ye endure, that ye might give drink to your souls with streams of immortality and nourish yourselves with the most sweet sight of the countenance of God, chanting with the angels a new hymn unto Him.

Departing from this sin-loving world as did the chosen people from Egypt, and delivered from the demonic hordes as from the warriors of Pharaoh, ye did attain unto the Thebaid, strengthened by the right hand of God; and laboring there ascetically, ye made your abode in the wilderness. Wherefore, delighting now, not in an earthly promised land, but in heaven, ye chant to Christ God a hymn of victory.

Theotokion: Thou art an aid to them that travel the narrow way, O Theotokos, for by thee are the afflicted strengthened and in thee do the weak become strong; in thee do the saints boast and by thee are sinners saved. We hymn thine ineffable lovingkindness.

ODE III

Irmos: O Christ, Who in the beginning confirmed the heavens in wisdom and founded the earth upon the seas, establish me upon the rock of Thy commandments, for none is holy save Thee, Who alone lovest mankind.

O venerable ones, establish us in the love of Christ, wherein ye were established by God, that having loved our neighbor as ourselves and forgiving the trespasses of them that trespass against us, we may obtain forgiveness of our sins.

Young in years, but elders in understanding were ye shown to be, O venerable ones, when, forsaking all the beauties of this world and looking toward the end of all things, ye made your abode in the desert; that there following after Christ with diligence, ye might, by the narrow and exceeding sorrowful gate, rather than by the most opportune path, enter in unto the Kingdom of heaven. Wherefore, ye now abide in the mansions of paradise.

Taught by faith and the fear of God, protected by the grace of the Holy Spirit, having Christ alone as Instructor after the repose of your abba, ye acquired sure salvation, and amazed the angels with your great patience. Wherefore, be ye now our instructors, and teach us to fulfill the commandments of the Lord.

Theotokion: The unceasing amazement of the angels, and the never-ending routing of demons, the salvation of men art thou, O all-immaculate Virgin. In thee do we confidently boast. With thee do we lay low our adversaries, and through thee do we hope to obtain eternal life.

Sedalion, in Tone VII:

Traveling in the desert of the virtues, and tormented by spiritual thirst, we have found you to be like the four rivers of paradise, O venerable ones; for to all that follow your life ye pour forth streams of grace abundantly and bedew withered hearts with your prayers, and with joy ye give drink to the souls of the faithful. Now celebrating your most glorious memory, humbly, we entreat you, O blessed ones, that through your fervent supplications ye rain down upon us the mercy of God.

ODE IV

Irmos: Thou art my Strength, O Lord, Thou art my Power. Thou art my God; Thou art my Joy; Who, leaving not the bosom of the Father, hath visited our lowliness. Wherefore, with the prophet Habbakuk I cry to Thee: Glory to Thy power, O Lover of mankind!

Wishing to flee the wide path that leadeth to destruction, O venerable ones, ye chose the desert as a habitation for yourselves and adopted voluntary poverty, laying up spiritual treasure in heaven. Wherefore, ye discovered Christ, the priceless Pearl, and ye glorified His most wondrous economy for you.

The ranks of angels were amazed, beholding mortal men that took upon themselves the ministry of the angels, and were nourished most wondrously with the most pure Body and Blood of Christ; and with awe they cried out to God: Glory to Thy lovingkindness, O Lover of mankind! Glory to Thy condescension, O Christ! Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

O Christ, Thou didst glorify Thy servants, bestowing strength upon them to confront the demons, ever strengthening them for their struggles, and especially, sending them an angel and vouchsafing them mystically the divine communion of Thy Body and Blood. Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Theotokion: Daughter of mortal Adam, and Mother of God art thou truly, O Theotokos, who gavest birth ineffably to thy Creator and Lord, Who redeemeth the generation of Adam from corruption. Glory to the ineffable counsel of God!

ODE V

Irmos: Wherefore hast Thou thrust me from Thy countenance, O Light unapproachable? A strange darkness hath covered me, wretch that I am; but lead me back to the light of Thy commandments, I pray.

Contemplating the ineffable light of Tabor with noetic eyes, dwelling on earth in the flesh, but in spirit with the angels, ye truly became citizens of heaven, O venerable ones. Wherefore, from an angel ye received the holy Mysteries of Christ. Honored, therefore, on earth by God with such a concern for you, what glories are ye now vouchsafed in heaven? But having boldness before the Holy Trinity, do ye pray unceasingly for us sinners, that He enlighten and save our souls.

In the firmament of heaven four noetic stars have been revealed unto us, shining brightly with rays of the virtues and driving away the oppressive gloom of sin: our venerable and God-bearing fathers John, Heraclemon, Andrew and Theophilus. Wherefore, by their supplications, O Christ God, grant us cleansing from our sins, for Thou art compassionate.

Driving away the dark forms of the evil spirits with the Name of Christ, and striking them with the precious Cross as with a sword of fire, ye were shown to be conquerors of temptations and deception. Wherefore, having shone forth like the sun with the righteous in the Kingdom of heaven, ye delight in the vision of the most radiant countenance of God. Beseech Christ God, O venerable ones, that He grant us might against all the power of the enemy and save us, for He is the Lover of mankind.

Theotokion: Enlighten our hearts which have been darkened by evil passions, O all-hymned one, for thou art the Mother of the Sun of righteousness and Mother of the never-waning Light, that, illumined by His rays and shining with the radiance of glory undimmed, we may don the bright garment of salvation.

ODE VI

Irmos: Cleanse me, O Savior, for many are my transgressions; and lead me up from the depths of evil, I pray, for to Thee did I cry, and Thou hearkened unto me, O God of my salvation.

Pondering your life, which equaled that of the angels, O venerable ones, we are beset by fear and trembling. How did ye survive in the impassable desert? How did ye endure burning heat and cold, hunger and thirst? How did ye put to shame demonic assaults? We hymn your struggles, we honor your repose, and we beseech you to ask of Christ the forgiveness of our sins.

Bound by bonds of natural love, ye were united by the most mighty bonds of love divine; brethren in the flesh, ye became brethren in Christ, and with one mouth did ye offer up prayer to the Triune God; wherefore, inseparable, ye dwell in the heavens. Pray ye now for us sinners, O venerable ones, that having put aside all evil everlastingly, we may learn unfeigned brotherly love, and thus fulfill the foremost commandment of the Lord.

In Christ-like fashion ye crucified your flesh with its passions and lusts, O venerable ones; wherefore, having ascended to the heights of dispassion, ye have become citizens of heaven. And now, dwelling with the bodiless ones, pray ye boldly, O holy ones, that having lifted up our mind which hath drooped down, and raised up our earthly eyes from this earthly vale, we may cry out to God from the depths of our degradation.

Theotokion: **F**rom the foul pit of vile passions and vain imaginings lead us up, O all-immaculate Virgin, for thou art an inexhaustible treasury of purity and an abyss of lovingkindness. Through thee is strength against the demons bestowed; through thee is victory over the passions given; through thee do we that call upon thine all-pure name hope to be saved.

Kontakion, in Tone VIII:

Come ye, let us hymn them that were brethren in the flesh, yet more so in spirit: the glorious John with the faithful Heraclemon, wondrous Andrew, and Theophilus, beloved of God. For, lo! loving the cruel life of the desert, they attained unto the longed-for heavenly homeland; where, abiding now in blessedness, they pray with boldness for our souls.

Ikos: **T**ell us, O venerable ones, what is the sweetness of the desert? What is the joy of a life of silence? What is the consolation of labors day and night? For we behold you as having a radiant countenance, resplendent with exceeding great joy. Wherefore, ye teach us to walk the narrow path, and lead us to the mansions of eternal repose, where with you all they that have been pleasing to Christ now pray with boldness for our souls.

ODE VII

Irmos: **O**nce, in Babylon, the fire stood in fear of the condescension of God, for which cause the children in the furnace danced with joyful feet, as in a meadow, and chanted: **Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers!**

Truly ye were virgins, desert-dwellers, fasters, ascetics, earthly angels and heavenly men, O venerable ones, instructed by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to Whom we now cry out, honoring your memory: Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers!

Consuming the passions, like a dry branch, with the fire of prayer, and moistening your hearts with the dew of tears, tried like gold in the furnace of patience, ye shone forth with rays of the virtues, O venerable ones. Amazed thereby, we cry out to the Maker of all, Whom ye glorified by your life: Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers!

A brother helped by a brother is like a strong city, thus, O venerable ones, bearing one another's burdens, and struggling in unity of mind, offering prayer to God with one mouth, delivered from the gaping maw of hell as from the lions' jaws, like the children saved of old in the furnace, ye cried out: Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers!

Theotokion: **O** Theotokos, who remained unconsumed by the fire of the Divinity and quenched the furnace of deception in the world, who bore in thy womb Him that is borne upon high by the cherubim: With the dew of thy prayers quench thou the flame of the passions, that saved by thee we may unceasingly cry out to thy Son: Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers!

ODE VIII

Irmos: **Madly did the Chaldean tyrant heat the furnace sevenfold for the pious ones; but, seeing them saved by a Higher Power, he cried out to the Creator and Redeemer: Ye children, bless; ye priests, hymn; ye people praise and exalt Him above all for ever!**

Emulating John, the Forerunner of the Lord, ye took up your abode in the desert, learning true repentance in silence, and cutting the tares of the passions down to the root with the sickle of the fear of God, that ye be not cast into everlasting fire like a dry branch. Hence, like fruitful olive trees ye flourished, and full of good works, transplanted from this earthly and burdensome life, ye praise God for ever in the paradise of sweetness.

Following Elijah of the fiery chariot in your life, abiding in the desert, more than he were ye nourished most gloriously. For a raven brought him tangible food, but an angel of the Lord placed before you the true Body and Blood of Christ. Oh, strange mystery! Oh, the good will of God! May His Name be blessed for ever!

Your prayer was like unto a pillar of fire, reaching from the earth to the heavens, O venerable ones. For, lo! it was offered from hearts consumed by divine fire, and with oneness of soul and unity of mind was it proffered. Wherefore, instruct us in prayer, O holy ones, that having acquired boldness before God, we may glorify the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost for ever!

Theotokion: Our hearts inflamed with the fire of divine love for thee, O Virgin, we know not the fullness of thy praise, O all-hymned one; for every tongue that speaketh boastful words doth fail, desiring to make known thy greatness, O Queen. Yet, O most good one, with silent mouths and yet more silent hearts may we be acceptable unto thee.

ODE IX

Irmos: Heaven was awestruck, and the ends of the earth were amazed, that God appeared as man in the flesh, and that your womb was more spacious than the heavens. Wherefore, O Theotokos, the chief among angels and men doth magnify thee.

Having acquired the-guilelessness of Abel and the chastity of Joseph, the faith of Abraham, and the meekness of David, O venerable ones, fittingly have ye been numbered among the choir of the righteous. But knowing that you live even after death and yet more, are concerned for our salvation, we magnify you with heartfelt love.

Glorifying your most festive memory, and faithfully hymning your ascetic struggles, may we not be forgotten by you, O holy ones. Be ye mindful of us sinners when ye raise your venerable hands on high to God, praying for the whole world; that, vouchsafed divine gifts through your mediation, we may unceasingly magnify God Who is wondrous in His saints.

With love we honor your memory, O venerable ones, and with faith we venerate your ascetic feats; with fear we praise your great patience. Wherefore, we earnestly pray:

Remember us, O blessed ones, who stand at the throne of the King of glory, fulfilling our humble requests which are of benefit, that we may magnify your aid and God's love for mankind.

Theotokion: Thou didst name for Thyself a Mother, O Savior, to whom Thou didst give the human race by adoption. Be Thou well pleased to obey her, O Christ, when, praying for us sinners, she boldly stretcheth forth her all-pure hands to Thee, our God; and save us, for the sake of the Theotokos, that with joy and love we may magnify her intercession.

After the Exapostilarion, Glory:

Desert-loving doves, swallows of heaven, announcing the spring of the Spirit in the world, taking flight from the winter of sin to the summer of dispassion, ever borne up on the wings of divine desire, taking shelter from the burning noonday heat of the passions beneath the shadow of the Tree of the Cross, ye did thereby avoid the talons of the cruel hawk; wherefore, abiding now in the heavenly garden, ye praise God, the Creator of all, for ever.