

First Saturday of the Great Fast

Molieben to the Great Martyr Theodore the Recruit



A warrior in the city of Amasea, in the Pontus Diocese, during the persecution of Maximian he together with other Christians was forced to deny Christ and to offer sacrifices to idols. Having refused to carry this out, Theodore was subjected to severe torture and then thrown into prison. Here while praying, he was calmed by the wonderful manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ. After some time the martyr was released from prison and again was forced to deny Christ with different forms of torture. Finally, seeing the inflexibility of the martyr, the ruler sentenced him to death by fire. St. Theodore by himself without trembling ascended the pyre, and with prayers and praises gave his soul to God, about the year 306. He was buried in the city of Euchaita (today Merzifon, in Asia Minor), then his relics were transferred to Constantinople in the temple in his name; his head is in Gaeta (in Italy). Fifty years after the death of St. Theodore, the Emperor Julian the Apostate, wishing to defile Christian fasting in the first week of the forty-day fast, each day secretly ordered that the blood of the sacrifices to the idols be sprinkled on the food provisions sold in the markets in the Constantinople Eparchy during the first week. St. Theodore appeared to the Archbishop of Constantinople Eudoxius and ordered him to notify all Christians not to buy the defiled provisions in the markets and to use as food koliva, i.e. boiled wheat with honey. In memory of this event the Orthodox Church annually celebrates the great-martyr on the Saturday of the first week of Great Lent; on the eve of this Saturday, on Friday, in the liturgy after the Prayer before the Ambo, a molieben with the canon to the martyr is served and the koliva is blessed.

*S.B. Bulgakov, **Handbook of Church Servers**, 2nd ed. (Kharkov 1900) p. 87 translated and permission given by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris.*

Following the prayer before the Ambo at Presanctified Liturgy, Psalm 142 is read followed by “God is the Lord”.

PSALM 142

Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my supplications!

In thy faithfulness answer me, in thy righteousness!

Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for no man living is righteous before Thee.

For the enemy has pursued me; he has crushed my life to the ground; he has made me sit in darkness like those long dead.

Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled.

I remember the days of old, I meditate on all that Thou has done; I muse on what Thy hands have wrought.

I stretch out my hands to Thee; my soul thirsts for Thee like a parched land.

Make haste to answer me, O Lord! My spirit fails!

Hide not Thy face from me, lest I be like those who go down to the Pit.

Let me hear in the morning of Thy steadfast love, for in Thee I put my trust.

Teach me the way I should go, for to Thee I lift up my soul.

Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies! I have fled to Thee for refuge!

Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God!

Let Thy good spirit lead me on a level path!

For Thy Name's sake, O Lord, preserve my life! In Thy righteousness bring me out of trouble!

And in Thy steadfast love cut off my enemies, and destroy all my adversaries, for I am Thy servant.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, glory the Thee, O God. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, glory the Thee, O God. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, glory the Thee, O God.

MOJIEBEN TO ST. THEODORE THE RECRUIT

First Saturday of Great Lent

Tone 2 (4 times)

GOD IS THE LORD AND HAS REVEALED HIM - SELF TO US

BLESS - ED IS HE THAT COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.

Troparion — Tone 2

GREAT ARE THE AC - COM - PLISH - MENTS OF FAITH. THE HOLY MARTYR

THEODORE REJOICED IN THE FOUNTAIN OF FLAMES AS THOUGH IN THE

STILL WA - TERS OF REST. CON - SUMED IN THE FIRE HE WAS OFFERED

UP AS A SACRIFICE TO THE TRIN - I - TY. SO BY HIS PRAYERS,

O CHRIST GOD, SAVE OUR SOULS.

GLORY... (REPEAT)

NOW AND EVER...

Theotokion - Tone 2

ALL YOUR MYS - TER - IES ARE BEYOND UN - DER - STAND - ING ALL BEYOND

GLORY, O MO - THER OF GOD; SEALED IN PURITY AND GUARDED IN VIR -

GIN - I - TY YOU WERE KNOWN WITHOUT DECEPTION TO BE A

MO - THER, IN GIV - ING BIRTH TO THE TRUE GOD:

IM - PLORE HIM THAT OUR SOULS MAY BE SAVED.

Psalm 50 is then read.

PSALM 50

Have mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great goodness: according to the multitude of Thy mercies do away mine offenses. Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my faults: and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight; that Thou mightest be justified in Thy saying, and clear when Thou are judged.

Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me. But lo, Thou requires truth in the inward parts: and shall make me to understand wisdom secretly.

Thou shall purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: Thou shall wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Thou shall make me hear of joy and gladness: that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.

Turn Thy face from my sins, and put out all my misdeeds. Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. O give me the comfort of Thy help again, and establish me with Thy free spirit.

Then shall I teach Thy ways unto the wicked, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God; Thou art the God of my health: and my tongue shall sing of Thy righteousness.

Thou shall open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall declare Thy praise. For Thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I giveth it Thee: but Thou delightest not in burnt-offerings.

The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, shall Thou not despise. O be favourable and gracious unto to Zion, build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.

Then shall Thou be pleased with the sacrifice of righteousness, with burnt-offerings and oblations. Then shall they offer young bullocks upon Thine altar.

According to the Russian tradition, the Canon is then taken in Tone 8
WITHOUT the Irmosi.

REFRAIN:

The choir then sings the following refrain:

O HO - LY GREAT MAR - TYR THE - O - DORE PRAY TO GOD FOR US.

GLORY TO THE FATHER, AND TO THE SON, AND TO THE HO - LY SPIR - IT.

NOW AND E - VER AND UNTO A - GES OF A - GES. A - MEN.

CANON TO ST. THEODORE THE RECRUIT

Ode 1

CHOIR: O Holy Great Martyr Theodore, pray to God for us.

PRIEST: I know the desire for God which filled your heart, O Theodore, and I am held fast by burning love for you: I dedicate to you my soul and body, and these words of praise.

CHOIR: O Holy Great Martyr Theodore, pray to God for us.

PRIEST: A decree was published, hateful to the Lord that sacrifice should be offered to idols and not to the living God. But refusing to obey, O victorious martyr, you were offered to God in sacrifice.

CHOIR: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

PRIEST: Held fast by divine love, O martyr Theodore, you have served as a soldier of the only-begotten Son of the most high God, and were rewarded for you faithful service.

CHOIR: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

PRIEST: The hosts of angels and of mortal men praise you, O Virgin Mother, without ceasing; for you have carried their Creator as a babe in you arms.

Ode 3

CHOIR: O Holy Great Martyr Theodore, pray to God for us.

PRIEST: I offer a hymn from my lips and a prayer from the affliction of my soul. Take pity on them, O victorious martyr Theodore.

CHOIR: O Holy Great Martyr Theodore, pray to God for us.

PRIEST: You have subjected the flesh to the dominion of your mind, O glorious martyr, and with both of them you served the Creator.

CHOIR: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

PRIEST: You have stood before the judgment-seat of the tyrant, bearing witness to Christ, your King and God; and you have refused to offer sacrifice to false gods, O Theodore.

CHOIR: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

PRIEST: To us and to all Christians, O pure Virgin, you are at all times a refuge and a rampart, and with never-silent voices we glorify you.

Ode 4

CHOIR: O Holy Great Martyr Theodore, pray to God for us.

PRIEST: Initiated into the divine mysteries, O martyr Theodore, you have confessed our sure redemption through the birth of God.

CHOIR: O Holy Great Martyr Theodore, pray to God for us.

PRIEST: Because they served the passions, they thought that God Himself is subject to passion; but, enlightened by the Spirit, O victorious Theodore, you have proved them to be wrong.

CHOIR: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

PRIEST: As we sing your praises we entreat you, blessed Theodore, through your intercessions deliver us from the passions and from all distress.

CHOIR: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

PRIEST: Untilled field, bearing the quickening ear of wheat that gives life to the world, save those who sing your praises, O Theotokos.

Ode 5

CHOIR: O Holy Great Martyr Theodore, pray to God for us.

PRIEST: 'Love the Lord who loves you', you have cried out, O martyr Theodore, to the others that suffered martyrdom with you.

CHOIR: O Holy Great Martyr Theodore, pray to God for us.

PRIEST: Your heart on fire with zeal, O victorious saint, you have burned up the idol of the false goddess together with the heathen temple.

CHOIR: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

PRIEST: With your invincible power, victorious Theodore, destroy my passions and the insolent boldness of the enemy.

CHOIR: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

PRIEST: O Theotokos, we praise you as a virgin after childbirth, for you have brought into the world God the Word made flesh.

Ode 6

CHOIR: O Holy Great Martyr Theodore, pray to God for us.

PRIEST: How weak, how frail is the arrogance of the false gods: they need men to defend them, and they are conquered by the fortitude of the martyrs who reject all lies and who proclaim the truth.

CHOIR: O Holy Great Martyr Theodore, pray to God for us.

PRIEST: How weak, how frail is the arrogance of the false gods: they need men to defend them, and they are conquered by the fortitude of the martyrs who reject all lies and who proclaim the truth.

CHOIR: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

PRIEST: O blessed Theodore, glory of martyrs, made strong by the power of God, you have regarded the torments of the ungodly as though they were arrows shot by children, for you have foreseen the eternity of the Age to come.

CHOIR: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

PRIEST: May we be delivered from our grievous transgressions by you prayers, O pure Mother of God, and may we dwell in the divine glory of the Son of God, who took flesh ineffable from you.

KONTAKION

After the 6th ode, the following Kontakion is sung.

Kontakion — Tone 8

HAV - ING AC - CEPT - ED IN YOUR HEART, AS A SHIELD THE FAITH

OF CHRIST YOU TRAM - PLED DOWN THE ADVERSE POWERS, O GREATLY

SUF - FER - ING ONE. THERE - FORE YOU HAVE RE - CEIVED A

HEAVENLY AND E - TER - NAL CROWN, SINCE YOU ARE IN - VIN -

CI - BLE, O THE - O - DORE.

And the canon continues to the end. After the 9th ode we sing the Irmos of the 9th canon.

Ode 7

CHOIR: O Holy Great Martyr Theodore, pray to God for us.

PRIEST: Your body was scourged, for the sake of God the Word, scourged in the flesh because of us; and rejoicing, O victorious martyr Theodore, with thanksgiving you have cried aloud to Him: ‘O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou.’

CHOIR: O Holy Great Martyr Theodore, pray to God for us.

PRIEST: The deliver of all was laid in the tomb and of His own will sealed up; and in the same way you were sealed up in the prison, O victorious martyr Theodore, and there have cried aloud: ‘O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou.’

CHOIR: O Holy Great Martyr Theodore, pray to God for us.

PRIEST: You have slain the passions and shaken off the desires of the flesh, O victorious martyr. Nourished not by food but by the love of God, you have sung: ‘O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou.’

CHOIR: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

PRIEST: One of the undivided Trinity appeared to you in prison, O victorious martyr, as once He appeared to the Children in the furnace; and He gave you strength to cry aloud, ‘O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou.’

CHOIR: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

PRIEST: Since it is Thy will, O Savior, to bestow on us salvation, Thou has taken up Thy dwelling in the Virgin’s womb, and Thou has made her the protector of the world. O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou.

Ode 8

CHOIR: O Holy Great Martyr Theodore, pray to God for us.

PRIEST: Blinded in his understanding, the governor of the lawless people impiously rebuked you for your faith in God: ‘Fool! Why do you vainly set your trust in a man that was put to death?’ But you have cried aloud: ‘O you children, bless Christ; O you priests, sing His praises; O you people, exalt Him above all forever.’

CHOIR: O Holy Great Martyr Theodore, pray to God for us.

PRIEST: As a wise and prudent steward of grace, O Theodore, with the grace given to you by God you have cried aloud to the commander when he ordered you to offer impious sacrifice: ‘This would be a disgrace to me and all who sing: ‘O you children, bless Christ; O you priests, sing His praises; O you people, exalt Him above all forever.’

CHOIR: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

PRIEST: Resisting with courage, you have boldly accused the tyrant, saying: ‘Why are you so mad as to bid me to forsake the Creator and falsely worship things created? But I cry aloud: ‘O you children, bless Christ; O you priests, sing His praises; O you people, exalt Him above all forever.’

CHOIR: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

PRIEST: Through visible forms, through dark figures and symbol, Moses and the Prophets foretold, O Virgin, your marvelous childbearing in ways surpassing nature. Joyfully, then, with true faith we sing your praises, and we exalt Christ above all forever.

Ode 9

CHOIR: O Holy Great Martyr Theodore, pray to God for us.

PRIEST: It was your love of God that brought you to martyrdom. Your body was consumed by the material fire, and you have departed rejoicing to the divine Fire, O victorious martyr Theodore, servant of God.

CHOIR: O Holy Great Martyr Theodore, pray to God for us.

PRIEST: All-honored saint, you were not destroyed by the fire, but have burnt up error and falsehood: you stand in God's presence, alive and rejoicing in Him with a martyr's joy, O victorious martyr Theodore, servant of God.

CHOIR: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

PRIEST: We acknowledge Thee, O Christ, to be one of the Trinity, in two perfect natures. At the prayers of Thy martyr Theodore, save Thy people that Thou has redeemed with Thy precious blood.

CHOIR: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

PRIEST: You have carried in your arms the invisible God, who is praised in the heavens by all the angelic powers. Though you at all times, He grants to us salvation, and in our distress we magnify you.

This canon is taken from 'The Lenten Triodion' translated by Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware.

Irmos 9 — Tone 8

MO - THER OF GOD AND VIRGIN WHO HAS NOT KNOWN MAN,

IN WAYS BEYOND OUR UN - DER - STAND - ING, AT THE WORD OF THE

AN - GEL YOU HAVE CON - CEIVED THE TRUE GOD. YOU ARE HIGH - ER

THAN THE SPIRITUAL POWERS OF HEA - VEN, AND WITH NEVER SILENT

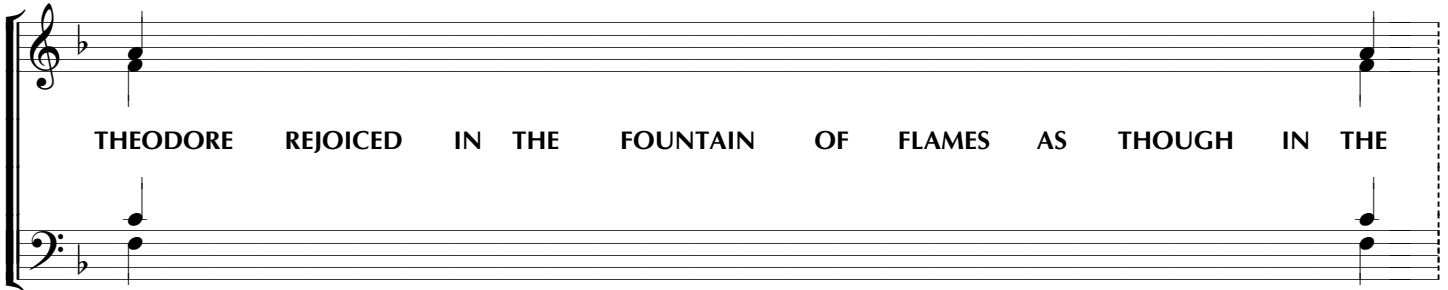
HYMNS OF PRAISE WE MAG - NI - FY YOU.

Then "Holy God" through "Our Father..." is read followed by the Troparion in Tone 2:

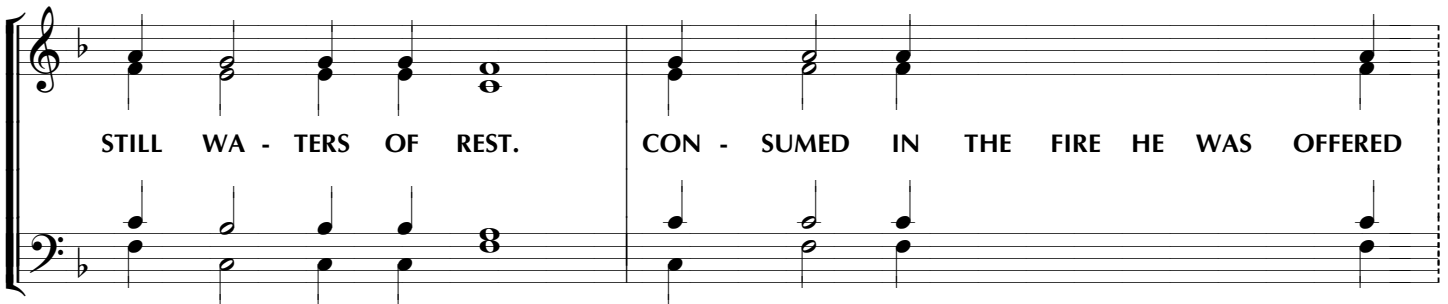
Troparion —Tone 2



GREAT ARE THE AC - COM - PLISH - MENTS OF FAITH. THE HOLY MARTYR



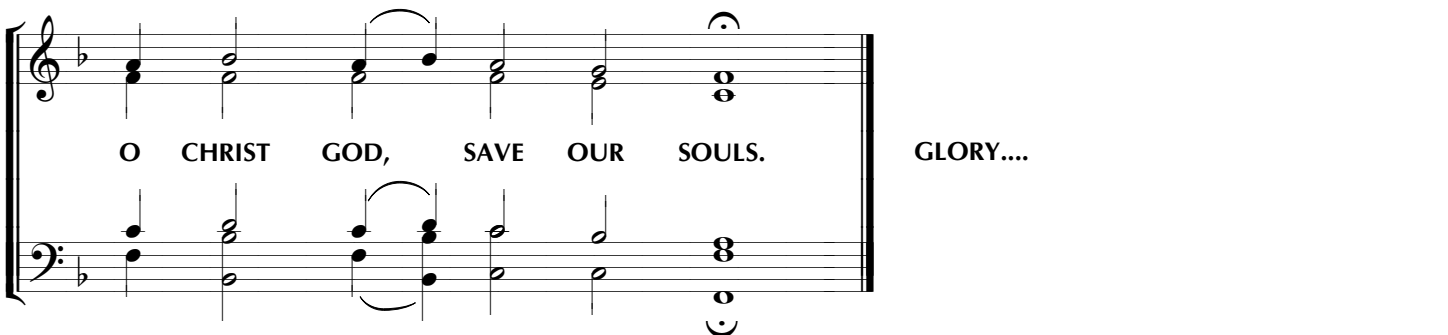
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CI - BLE, O THE - O - DORE.

NOW AND EVER...

Theotokion — Tone 8

ALL OF US IN OUR SIN - FUL - NESS HAVE YOUR FERVENT HELP AS OUR

PROTECTION AND SURE DE - FENSE, O MOST PURE MA - RY, VIR - GIN AND

MOTHER, THE SALVATION OF CHRIST - IANS. CEASE NOT TO IN - TER - CEDE

FOR US BE - FORE THE SAVIOR, THAT WE MAY RECEIVE FOR - GIVE - NESS.

Blessing of the Koliva (boiled wheat and honey) and the conclusion of the Presanctified Liturgy.