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THE FIFTH MONTH

TIR 30

(February 07)

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD. AMEN.

On this day became martyrs the holy and blessed virgins Pistis, Elpis, ‘Agapis, and their mother Sophia. This blessed mother belonged to the people of the city of Antioch, and was of noble family, and she brought forth these three daughters and called them by the three above names, the interpretations of which are, “Faith, Hope, and Charity (i.e. Love)”; and the interpretation of the name of their mother is “Wisdom.” And when the maidens had grown a little, she took them to the city of Rome, and taught them goodness, and piety, and the fear of God, and the doctrine of the Church. And when the report of her came to the Emperor of Rome, Arianus, the wicked, he commanded [the soldiers] to fetch them and to drag them to him by the hair of their heads; and the soldiers did as the emperor commanded. And their mother exhorted them, and taught them, and urged them to endure patiently, and she encouraged them in the Faith of Christ, and said unto them, “Take good heed to yourselves, O my daughters, that your hearts become not weary through considering the honor of this fleeting world, so that ye may not be far from the glory which is everlasting. Endure, O my daughters, so that ye may be with your Bridegroom Christ, and may enter with Him to the heavenly marriage-feast.” Now the days of Pistis, the eldest daughter, were twelve years, and the days of Elpis were ten years, and the days of ‘Agapis were nine years. And when they had brought the maidens before the emperor, he commanded them to make Pistis the eldest come near to him, and he said unto her, “Hearken unto me and I will give thee in marriage to one of the nobles of my empire, and I will show thee much favor; worship Apollo.” And Pistis reviled him and cursed him. And he commanded the soldiers to beat her with rods, and to cut off her breasts, and to boil pitch and bitumen in a cauldron and to cast her into it; and they did this to her. And she stood up praying in the cauldron, and the fire never touched her, and the interior of the cauldron became like the dew in the mouth of the morning. And the people who were there marveled, and many of them believed on our Lord Jesus Christ, and the soldiers cut off their heads as they praised God. Then the governor commanded them to cut off the head of Pistis with the sword, [and they did so,] and she received the crown of martyrdom in the kingdom of the heavens. And her mother took away her body. Then they brought forward the second daughter whose name was Elpis, and the soldiers scourged her and beat her very severely, and cast her into the boiling cauldron, but the heart of the flame became like snow. Then the emperor commanded them to take her out, and to cut off her head, and they did this to her, and she received the crown of martyrdom in the kingdom of the heavens; and her mother took away her body. And Sophia was afraid for her youngest daughter lest she should become terrified at the torture, and she encouraged her to endure. And the governor commanded them to torture her on the wheel, and they did so, and she cried out to our Lord Jesus Christ to strengthen her and enable her to endure; and God sent an angel, and he smashed the wheel. And the emperor also commanded them to cast her into a red-hot oven, and she made the sign of the Cross over her face, and she threw herself into the oven, and straightway it became as cool dew. And those who were there saw two men in white apparel going about her, and they marveled exceedingly; and many of them believed on our Lord Jesus Christ, and the soldiers cut off their heads and they became martyrs. Then the governor commanded them to make iron rods red-hot in a furnace and to lay them upon her, and God strengthened her to endure and the fire did not touch her. Then he commanded them to cut off her head, and they did so, and she received the crown of martyrdom in the kingdom of the heavens. And their mother took the bodies of her three daughters, and made them ready for burial, and brought them to a place outside the city, and she sat down and wept over them; and she besought them to ask God to take away her soul, and God received her petition and took it. And certain believers came and made her ready for burial, and they took her body, and

the bodies of her three daughters, and buried them. And as for the wicked emperor, God sent upon him a disease, and his eyes protruded, and his flesh split open, and his bones appeared, and his hands dropped off, amid blood and pus, and worms fell [from him], and all his body rotted, and he died an evil death, for God slew (?) him because of the virgins.

And on this day died Abba Minas, the forty-seventh Archbishop of the city of Alexandria. Great tribulation came upon this holy man during the period of his office. He finished a good fight, and he endured many tribulations, and he pleased God, and he protected his flock for nine years and died in peace. Salutation to Minas.

And on this day also Saint Thecla, and the four virgins who were with her, became martyrs. And with them there was a certain sinful man, a priest, whose name was Pola, and one reported to the governor that he was a rich man, and he commanded [the soldiers] to seize his riches. And Pola came to the governor, and entreated him to restore to him his possessions, but he refused. And he brought the holy virgins to the governor who ordered them to worship the sun, and when they refused the governor said unto Pola the priest, "If thou wilt eat a dead body, and drink blood, I will give back to thee thy possessions." And Pola did as the governor commanded him, and he denied Christ. And when pretexts to kill Pola were wanted by the governor he said unto him, "If thou wilt make the virgins deny their Faith I will give back to thee thy possessions." And Pola talked to the virgins, and told them what the governor said unto him, and they reviled Pola, saying, "Thou son of Satan, thou enemy of righteousness, seeing that thou art our teacher, how canst thou advise us to deny Christ?" When the governor heard their words he commanded the soldiers to beat them with whips, but they neither made answer to the governor, nor did they fear his tortures. And the governor spoke again unto Pola, saying, "If thou wilt kill the virgins I will give back to thee thy possessions." When Pola heard this, he worked up his courage and he went to kill the virgins, for his heart was filled with love for gold, like that of Judas Iscariot. And the virgins said unto him, "O wicked shepherd, how canst thou destroy thy sheep because of thy love of money? We have received from thy hand the Body and Blood of Christ." And whilst they were saying these words, he cut off their heads with the sword, after the manner of a man who is killed in war. And the governor saw madness of Pola, and he slew him with the sword and he died, having lost his money and his Faith. Now the names of the virgins were Thecla, and Maria, and Martha and her handmaiden, and Abeya. Salutation to Thecla and to the four virgins who were with her.

And on this day also Saint Irene became a martyr. The father of this saint was Emperor of Rome, and his name was Marcianus, and he worshipped idols; and her mother was a Christian woman. And having begotten this holy woman her parents built a tower for her, and they brought her there with twelve virgins, who wore ornaments of gold and silver; and they sent up with her ninety-seven idols for her to worship, and they sealed the door upon her, and she remained inside for seven years and seven months. One day when she lifted up her eyes towards the east she saw a dove with an olive branch in her mouth, and she threw the branch on the table; and the saint lifted up her eyes again towards the west, and she saw a raven with a serpent in his mouth, which he threw on the table; and she also saw a hawk with a crown in his mouth, which he threw on the table. And the vision being finished she marveled. And when her teacher, whom her father the emperor had given her, came and she had related to him the vision, he said unto her, "The dove is the wisdom of Rome, and the olive branch is the seal of baptism; and the hawk is a strong king, and the crown is good works, and the raven is a weak king; needs must that thou shalt suffer for the Name of Christ." When the saint had grown up her father and mother went up to her, and they talked with her concerning the matter of her marriage; and Saint Irene said unto them, "Wait for me [to answer] seven days." And then she prayed to God that He would direct her into the way, which was right. And the angel of God came and said unto her, "Be strong, and of good courage, and put on strength, for Timothy, the apostle of Paul, shall come unto thee, and he shall baptize thee with Christian baptism, and thou shalt become a martyr. And Timothy came, and having rent the walls of the house, entered her presence, and taught her all the commandments of the Gospel. Then he brought water, and prayed over her, and baptized her in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; and he departed from her. And having risen up Saint Irene smashed all the idols of

her father. After seven days her father and her mother came unto her and talked to her as before, and Saint Irene answered and said, "I have been called by the heavenly King, Jesus Christ, and I have been baptized in His Name." When her father heard his daughter's words he was wroth, and he took her down from her upper room and dragged her away, and her mother followed her, scattering ashes upon her head as she went. And he commanded his servants to bring four horses that were bound in chains, and to tie her to them by the hair of her head. And one of the horses shied because one of the chains cut him, and he cut off the right hand of the emperor, who fell down and died. And Irene having risen up and prayed, lifted up the dead, and she made his hand to be as it had been formerly. And when the people saw this they and her father believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and three thousand souls were baptized by her hands. When the Emperor Decius heard of her he came into that city and seized Saint Irene, and he commanded the soldiers to hang her up by her hair, and they did so. Then he commanded them to cast her into a deep pit filled with serpents and scorpions; and by the power of God they all died. And he also commanded them to saw her in halves with a saw, but the saw broke and the wicked emperor died. And when the son of the emperor heard this he attacked the city, and he seized Saint Irene, and he commanded the soldiers to drive sharp nails through her hands and her feet, and to heap up a great quantity of sand on her back, and to tie her to the tails of four horses, in order to destroy her body; but they were unable to vanquish her with all these tortures. As for that wicked man, the angel of God killed him with a spear of fire. And Saint Irene healed the sick, and even raised the dead. And a fourth emperor who heard about her, had her brought into his presence, and he pressed her to offer to the gods; and when she refused to do so he commanded them to cast her into the fire, and she came out of the fire and cursed the emperor. And when he saw the miracle he himself believed on Christ. And the King of Persia came to the city, and he seized Saint Irene, and drove his spear into her with his own hands, and she died; and the angel of God came and raised her up, and she came into the city preaching in the Name of Christ. And after a few days she was caught up into the Garden of Delight. Salutation to Irene.

And on this day also died Gregory the Theologian.

And on this day also died Abba 'Akresteros (Christopher) the fighter. This saint lived in the desert of the Jordan, and one of the monks bowed before him and entreated him, saying, "O my father 'Akresteros (Christopher), do me an act of grace, and describe to me all thy manner of life and work so that I may profit thereby." And the elder said unto him, "O my son, when I became a monk I was a young man, and I used to go by night to the sanctuary (or, church) of Saint Theodosius to pray there. In it were eighteen steps, and on each step I used to make one hundred prostrations until they blew the horn. Then straightway I would go into the church, and finish my Rule with the brethren, and I continued to do this for ten years. One day after I had finished my usual prayers, my mind was carried away captive, and I saw two men in white raiment trimming the lamps; one half of them they left lighted and the other half they extinguished. And I said unto them, 'What is this thing?' And these fathers said unto me, 'The lamp of the man who loveth his brother burneth.' And I said unto them, 'Of which kind is my lamp?' And they said unto me, 'Thou lovest thy brethren, and we keep thy lamp alight.'" Then 'Akresteros (Christopher) went into the monastery of Sina by himself, and he dwelt there for fifty years, the whole time fighting the spiritual fight. And a voice came unto him, saying, "Return to thy monastery so that thou mayest be with thy fathers"; then he returned to his monastery, and died in peace.

And on this day also are commemorated the righteous who fled.

Salutation to 'Akresteros (Christopher).

Salutation to the many thousands of souls who looking on at Irene believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. [The Bodleian MS. gives the number as 130,030.]

Here endeth that which is to be read during the month of Ter in the peace of God, to Whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Glory be to God Who is glorified in His Saints. Amen.