

Encouragement Thursday

Venerable-Martyr Nikon & Companions

32nd Day of the Holy & Great 40 Days Fast — March 23

Andrew was born in Damascus of Christian parents. He was a mute from birth until the age of seven. When his parents brought him to church and he received Holy Communion, he began to speak. So great is the power of the Divine and Holy Communion. At age fourteen, Andrew went to Jerusalem and was tonsured in the Lavra of St. Sabas the Sanctified. By virtue of his understanding and asceticism, he surpassed many of the older monks and was an example to them. After a while, the patriarch took him as his personal secretary. When the Monothelite heresy began to rage the heresy which taught that the Lord Jesus did not possess a human will but only a divine will the Sixth Ecumenical Council convened in Constantinople in the year 681 A.D. during the reign of Constantine IV [Bearded One]. By his prayers, he drove the Saracens from the Island of Crete. Andrew wrote many books of instruction, hymns and canons of which the most renowned is the **Great Canon of Repentance read on Thursday of the Fifth Sunday of The Great Fast Season**. This beacon of the Church ended his earthly life and with his soul, took up habitation in the Kingdom of Christ in the year 721 A.D.

Nicon was born in Naples of a pagan father and Christian mother. Nicon was a Roman officer in Naples and was not baptized, even though his mother tutored him secretly from his father in the Faith of Christ. Once, when Nicon was sent into battle with his troops, his mother counseled him to make the sign of the cross and to call upon Christ for help if any misfortune would befall him. And, indeed, while in battle, Nicon's troops were completely surrounded; and, toward the end of the battle, Nicon made the sign of the cross in his heart and cried out to Christ. Immediately, he was filled with unusual strength and pursued his enemies. Some he slew and others he forced to flee. Returning to his home, Nicon continuously cried out in amazement, "Great is the Christian God." Since he had made his mother happy with the news of his victory with the help of the Cross of Christ, he secretly sailed to Asia where Theodosius the Bishop of Cyzicus baptized him. Following his baptism, he secluded himself in a monastery where he devoted himself to study and asceticism. Before his death Theodosius had a vision in which he was told to ordain Nicon as his successor. Immediately the aged Theodosius summoned Nicon and ordained him a deacon; after that, a priest, and then, a bishop. Shortly thereafter, according to God's Providence, Nicon came to Naples where he discovered that his mother was still living. Following his mother's death, Nicon, with nine disciples, his former war companions, withdrew to Sicily and there dedicated himself to preaching the Gospel. However, at that time there was a terrible persecution of Christians. Prince Quintianus captured Nicon with his companions and inflicted great pain and suffering upon them. His one-hundred ninety disciples and companions were beheaded. The tormentor tied Nicon to the tail of a horse, hurled him from a steep wall into a gorge, beat him, and skinned him; but Nicon survived all of these tortures. Finally, he was beheaded and took up habitation with the Lord. St. Nicon suffered during the reign of the Emperor Decius.

Troparion of Venerable-Martyr Nikon & Companions (Tone 4 – pew book page 383)

TROPARION (Tone 4)

Your martyr Nikon and his companions received eternal crowns from You, O Lord, * as the reward for their sufferings, O God. * With Your strength they vanquished the daring of the devil hosts, * and destroyed their tortures. * Save our souls by their prayers.

KONDAKION (Tone 4)

By your holy life you assembled a choir * from those who had lived humbly * and had followed you before the throne of God on high. * Your radiance spans the heavens like the very sun, * and by the rays of your pains you dispense darkness, * and wash out lies by the torrent of your blood.

Kondakion for the Encouragement Thursday (Tone 6)

O my soul! O my soul! * Get up! Why are you sleeping? * The end draws near and you must be ready. * Gird yourself so that Christ may spare you. * He is present everywhere and fulfills everything.

PROKIMENON (pew book page 390 - Tone 8)

Let the faithful rejoice in glory * shout for joy and take their rest
verse: Sing to the Lord a new song of praise * in the assembly of the faithful

ALLELUIA (pew book page 390 - Tone 6)

verse: Happy the man who fears the Lord * and greatly delights in His commands.

verse: His posterity will be mighty * upon the earth

COMMUNION HYMN

Rejoice in the Lord you righteous one; praise from the upright is fitting.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Concluding Hymn sung once by Priest; twice by people

Having suffered the Passion for us, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us!

Preterp'ivj za nas Strasti, Isuse Christe, Syne Bozij, pomiluj nas!

Daily Prayer During The Great Fast

(February 20 through March 31)

O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, and Hope of all on land and of those far away at sea; You have established these holy days of fasting by Your law and the prophets as a way for our mortification and repentance. At the proper time, You manifested Yourself in the flesh on this earth, and by Your fast of forty days and nights, You sanctified the practice of fasting and commanded us to follow Your example. As a merciful and gracious God, enable us to continue these holy days of The Great Fast with perfect repentance, with humility instead of hypocrisy, with fervent prayer, with hunger and thirst, with frequent prostrations, and with a contrite heart. Enable us, also, to complete this time of The Great Fast without fault and with a pure conscience, keeping our faith intact and achieving victory over sin. Send an angel of peace to watch over our lives, to protect us from all snares of our enemies, and to assist us in the performance of good deeds. Strengthen us by Your power so that we may accomplish the spiritual works of The Great Fast. Then, with our passions in control and our souls and bodies properly cleansed, we will be worthy to partake, without condemnation, of Your most pure Body and Your most precious and life-giving Blood. For You are the merciful and gracious Lover of Mankind, Who came down to earth to save all; and we give glory to You (+) and to Your Eternal Father, and Your All-Holy, Gracious, and Life-Giving Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.