

Month of January

THE 25TH DAY

**Commemoration of the Seven Holy Brethren,
Januarius, Felix, Philip, Silvanus, Alexander, Vitalis & Martial,
& Their Mother, Felicity,
Who Suffered Martyrdom at Rome**

***N.B.:** In the Orthodox Church, all of these martyrs are commemorated as a group on January 25th. But because the main commemoration on this date is that of the great St. Gregory the Theologian, it is fitting to transfer the martyrs' commemoration to July 10th, the date on which the Western Church, beginning from the 4th century or even earlier, has commemorated the seven martyred brethren. Alternatively, this service may appropriately be celebrated on November 23rd, the day on which the Western Church has from ancient times celebrated a separate commemoration of the holy Martyr Felicity.*

At Vespers

On "Lord, I have cried...", these stichera, in Tone I: Spec. Mel.: "O all-praised martyrs..."—

O all-praised martyr Felicity, happy indeed wast thou to behold thy children bearing witness to the one God, their souls taking wing, upborne by their guardian angels, through the gates of paradise, where they abide in great peace in Christ Jesus, the eternal Tree of life.

Thou didst not fear the weighted scourge, O Januarius; nor were ye dismayed by the staves that smote you, O Felix and Philip. The Tiber held no terror for thee, O Silvanus; nor were ye daunted by the sword, O Alexander, Vitalis and Martial. O ye seven holy brethren, pray to God for us!

The ungodly Antoninus was put to shame, and the iniquitous Publius, his minion, was confounded; for though mighty in worldly power, they were utterly defeated by a woman and seven children, who bravely defied their wicked commands and cleaved unto Christ, their Savior alone.

Glory...: Idiomelon, in Tone II—

Happy are the godly athletes, the pious sons of a pious mother; for, brought before the tribunal of the cruel tyrant, they utterly refused to sacrifice to graven stones, and spurning all his threats and blandishments, they cried aloud to him: "Cease thine ungodly suasions, O Publius, for there is but one God, He Who hath created all things; and to Him alone will we offer worship! Christ Jesus is the true God, Who by His death hath redeemed us from sin and Satan, and Who will set our souls before His heavenly throne! Wherefore, tempt us not to forsake our God and Lord, Who in His loving-kindness hath mercy and saveth our souls!"

Now & ever...: Theotokion, or this stavrotheotokion, in the same tone: Spec. Mel.: "When from the Tree..."—

When thou didst behold hanging upon the Tree the most ripe Cluster, Whom thou didst bear as a babe in thy womb uncultivated, thou didst exclaim, lamenting and crying aloud: "O my Child and Benefactor, through Thy divine consolations pour forth the sweetness whereby all the drunkenness of the passions is made sober, for the sake of me who gave Thee birth, in that Thou art compassionate."

Aposticha stichera from the Octoechos; and Glory...: Idiomelon, in Tone VIII—

O ye faithful, let us praise the seven sons of Felicity, who, though young in years, manfully died for the King of all like valiant warriors; for, raised in Christian piety, they denounced the impiety of Publius, spurning this fleeting life and fixing their gaze upon the eternal. All that they possessed they offered unto Christ our God: their spirit, their bravery and firm resolve, and their whole lives. O the pious root that gave rise to such martyrs! O their radiant souls, which shone like seven lamps before the throne of the Lord! As ye stand before Him with Felicity, your mother, entreat Him earnestly, O holy ones, that He have pity on those who honor your holy memory with love.

Now & ever...: Theotokion, or this stavrotheotokion, in the same tone: Spec. Mel.: "O all-glorious wonder..."—

The ewe-lamb beheld the Lamb stretched out, of His own will, upon the Tree of the Cross, and cried out maternally, weeping and in pain: "O my Son, what is this strange sight? How canst Thou die, O Long-suffering One, Who, as Lord, givest life unto all, and bestowest resurrection upon those who are of earth? I glorify Thy great condescension, O my God!"

Troparion of the martyrs, in Tone I—

Christ, the Wisdom of the Father, hath founded His house on seven pillars cut from a single rock: the seven pious sons of the holy Felicity, who for their steadfast confession and endurance are become a mighty bulwark for us, repelling the assault of the enemy of our race. At their entreaties, O Lord, have mercy and save our souls.

At Matins

At "God is the Lord...", the troparion of the martyrs, twice; Glory..., Now & ever...: Theotokion.

Canon of the martyrs, with 4 troparia, the acrostic whereof is "Happy is Felicity in her holy children", in Tone VIII—

Ode I

Irmos: O Lord Who didst fashion an all-glorious path for the people in the sea, make Thou the journey to heaven passable for us, that we may sing a new song unto Thee.

How happy is Felicity, who by her pious instruction and earnest admonitions wrought for her seven holy sons a path to heaven, where they sing a new song unto God.

Anguish pierced the heart of the holy martyr when she witnessed her children slain, one after another, for Christ; yet she rejoiced greatly in their steadfast confession.

Pure of heart, unsullied by the mire of the passions and sins, the seven youths stood bravely at the tribunal, proclaiming that there is only one God, the Creator of all.

Theotokion: Pray to thy Son and God, O most immaculate one, that, having trodden the straight and narrow way, we may chant unto Him a new song with the angelic choirs.

Ode III

Irmos: O Lord Who saidst: Be thou made firm upon the rock of faith, whereon I will found My Church, save me who cry out: Thou art the Son of the living God, O Christ, and my spirit hath been established in Thee!

Ye pious brethren, whose faith in the living God was as firm as adamant, like

precious stones crowning your mother's brow ye shine with splendor before the radiant throne of the Trinity in the heavens.

"I will found My Church, and the gates of hades will not prevail against it," saith the Lord, O martyrs; and, having set your spiritual feet firmly on the rock of faith, ye commended your souls to His loving care.

Scourges weighted with lead maimed your young body, O Januarius, and thou didst experience unspeakable agony; but, looking to the rewards promised by Christ to those who prevail, thou didst not deny Him.

Theotokion: Forget not thy sinful children, entrusted to thee by thy Son as He hung upon the Cross, O Virgin Mother of God; that, established on the rock of faith by thine intercession, O all-pure one, we may worship Him forever.

Sessional hymn, in Tone V: Spec. Mel.: "The Word Who with the Father and the Spirit is equally without beginning..."—

"My children, ye will live eternally with Christ our Savior if ye are faithful to Him and do not sacrifice to false gods. Wherefore, be of good courage, and set the eyes of your heart on heaven, where your Lord awaiteth you with His angels and saints!" the blessed Felicity earnestly exhorted her sons.

Glory..., Now & ever...: Theotokion—

Having acquired thee as our haven and rampart, our refuge, hope and protection, and our fervent intercessor, we, the faithful, have recourse to thee and cry out earnestly, exclaiming with faith: Have mercy, O Theotokos, upon those who place their trust in thee, and deliver us from our transgressions.

Stavrotheotokion—

Beholding Thee suspended willingly upon the Cross between two thieves, O Christ, Thy Mother said, her maternal womb rent asunder: "O my sinless Son, how is it that Thou hast been unjustly hung upon the Cross as a malefactor, Who desirest to revive the human race, in that Thou art all-good?"

Ode IV

Irmos: Thou art my strength, O Lord, Thou art my power; Thou art my God, Thou art my joy, Who, without leaving the bosom of the Father, hast visited our lowliness. Wherefore, with the Prophet Habbakuk I cry unto Thee: Glory to Thy power, O Thou Who lovest mankind!

Even as she witnessed the slaying of her children, the godly Felicity besought them not to lose heart, but to trust in the Lord, Who is their strength and joy, and Who would give them the strength to cry out amid their pain: Glory to Thy power, O Thou Who lovest mankind!

Let us praise the patience of Felix and Philip, whom the tormentors pitilessly smote with wooden staves, striving in vain to persuade them to sacrifice to the demons; for the holy martyrs cried out to the true God: Glory to Thy power, O Thou Who lovest mankind!

Imitating Christ the Lord, Who endured scourging and beating in His love for mankind, Januarius, Philip and Felix shed their blood for Him Who died that we might have eternal life and cry with them to the true God: Glory to Thy power, O Thou Who lovest mankind!

Theotokion: Cry ye now with a mighty voice, O Christians, praising her who ineffably gave birth unto God, and lift up your voices in adoration of the All-holy Trinity,

crying out to Him with zeal the words of the prophet: Glory to Thy power, O Thou Who lovest mankind!

Ode V

Irmos: Out of the night my spirit riseth to chant hymns to Thee, for light and peace are Thy commandments.

Iniquitous were the laws of the heathen, but Felicity and her sons obeyed the statutes of Christ the Light.

The night of torments fell upon the martyrs, but Christ, the Sun of righteousness, shone His light upon them.

Ye did not falter, O athletes of the Lord, and as children ye struggled manfully for the Judge of the contest.

Theotokion: In the dark night of despondency we beseech thee, O Theotokos, to obtain for us the light of grace divine.

Ode VI

Irmos: As Thou didst lead the Prophet Jonah up out of the sea monster, O Lord, deliver me from the pursuit of the alien, and save me, O Compassionate One, in that Thou art greatly merciful.

Never did the blessed Silvanus waver in his confession; wherefore, with the waters wherein he was drowned the Lord quenched for him the lake of fire that awaiteth the unrepentant.

Having pursued the martyrs like wolves, the servants of Satan perforce withdrew, for the souls of the saints found refuge in the heavenly dwelling of Him Who surpasseth all in mercy.

Each of the sons of the martyred mother were devoured by inhuman cruelty, but Christ the Master delivered them from perdition, as He caused the sea monster to spew forth the prophet.

Theotokion: Rescue us from the depredations of the beast that would devour us, O Lady; deliver us from the hosts of our enemies, who pursue us pitilessly; and beg thy Son to save us, O pure Theotokos.

Kontakion, in Tone IV: Spec. Mel.: "Having been lifted up upon the Cross..."—

Bearing witness to Christ the Master, the martyred children cried out to the ungodly governor: "Know, O tyrant, that we will endure thy divers tortures out of love for our God; and thou shalt never separate us from His love by any torments thou canst devise. With our beloved mother we will gladly lay down our lives for Him, Who will take our souls to dwell in His kingdom on high, as He promiseth His disciples!"

Ikos: With great piety and maternal care did the holy Felicity raise her children to love and worship Christ our God, and to preserve and honor the true Faith in Him. Wherefore, when it befell them to testify to His Truth, she exhorted them to endure sufferings with gladness, trusting in His mercy and loving-kindness, and never to deny Him in word or deed when the tyrants demanded unholy sacrifice from them; for, said she, they who contend lawfully win the crown, and they who prevail unto the end will receive from the Savior those rich rewards which He promiseth His disciples!"

Ode VII

Irmos: Once, in Babylon, the youths who had come forth from Judæa trod down the flame of the furnace with their faith in the Trinity, chanting: O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou!

How like were the two cities: for youths trod down the flames in Babylon, and children triumphed over idolatry in Rome, all chanting: O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou!

O martyred children, Alexander, Vitalis and Martial, ye all refused to worship graven images, chanting instead to the one God of all: O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou!

Like the Hebrew youths of old, Januarius and his brethren held fast their faith in the All-holy Trinity, and lifted up their voices, chanting: O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou!

Theotokion: Yet a little while, and we all must needs stand at the judgment-seat of the Lord. Intercede then for us, O Mistress, that we may chant: O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou!

Ode VIII

Irmos: Becoming vanquishers of the tyrant and the flame by Thy grace, taking exceeding care to keep Thy commandments, the children cried out: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Choirs of angels were amazed to see thee bow thy head beneath the sword, O holy martyr Alexander, and they bore thee aloft as a victor, crying: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

How blessed are ye, O Vitalis and Martial, namesakes of life and war, for through you Christ our Life waged war against the primeval serpent and vanquished him, our ancient foe.

In the sword that slew you, O holy ones, ye wielded a two-edged blade, cutting your fleshly bonds that ye might soar aloft to your Savior, and smiting the enemy of our race.

Theotokion: Leave us not to perish in sin, for but for thee our iniquities will drag us down into the lake of fire; but teach us to chant with thee: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Ode IX

Irmos: We magnify thee, the most immaculate Mother of Christ our God, Whom the Holy Spirit overshadowed.

Devoutly do we magnify thee, O blessed mother of martyrs, who gavest courage to thy sons amid their struggles.

Rejoicing, the martyrs entered into the courts of our God, but the accursed Publius and Antoninus suffer eternally.

Every torment ye endured won crowns for you on high, O saints; wherefore, ye abide in happiness forever.

Theotokion: Nurture us, thy children, O all-immaculate one, for we rejoice to magnify thee with the angels of thy Son.

Exapostilarion: Spec. Mel.: "Heaven with stars..."—

As the seven-starred Pleiades adorn the heavens, so the seven martyred children, with Felicity their mother, shine upon us the light of grace, guiding us through the gloom of this life to the splendor of Christ, our Light and Life.

Theotokion—

Those who do not with pure faith venerate thine image and that of thy Son and God, O Virgin, do thou reject as impious and commit to Gehenna.

Aposticha stichera from the Octoechos; and Glory...: Idiomelon, in Tone IV—

Assembling today, O ye Christians, let us gaze with wonder upon the contest of the martyrs: for though young in years, they stood against men of savage strength and intent; and though children, they manfully endured agony and death! Wherefore, with psalms and spiritual songs let us magnify them as is meet; for the might of the tyrant Antoninus was set at naught by a single woman and seven children! By their entreaties, O merciful Jesus, take pity on us and save our souls!

Now & ever...: Theotokion, or this stavrotheotokion, in the same tone: Spec. Mel. : “As one valiant among the martyrs...”—

As 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 hands and feet, O Word, have been pierced with nails by the iniquitous, and Thou hast shed Thy blood, O Master?”

At Liturgy

Prokimenon, in Tone IV—

In the saints that are in His earth hath the Lord been wondrous; He hath wrought all His desires in them.

Stichos: I beheld the Lord ever before me, for He is at my right hand, that I might not be shaken.

READING FROM THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF PETER

§ 58, FROM THE MIDPOINT

Brethren: Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To Whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner Stone, elect, precious: and he who believeth on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore who believe, He is precious: but unto those who be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to those who stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Alleluia, in Tone VII—

Stichos: Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast Thou perfected praise.

Stichos: O Lord, our Lord, how wonderful is Thy name in all the earth!

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK, §44

The Lord said: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be

married to another, she committeth adultery." And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." And He took them up in His arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

Communion verse—

Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous; praise is meet for the upright.