

September 19
Commemoration of the Holy Bishop Theodore of Tarsus,
Archbishop of Canterbury & Wonderworker of All England

Composed by Reader Isaac Lambertson

At Vespers

At Lord, I have cried, 6 stichera: 3 of the Cross, in Tone IV: Spec. Mel.: Thou hast given a sign

The most holy Cross, the invincible trophy, cometh forth today, revealed from the earth like a hidden treasure, enriching the whole world with the rays of its universal goodness. Wherefore, we glorify the all-good dispensation of Christ our God, Who deigned to be crucified thereon.

Of old, the Cross, depicted by Moses, the faithful beholder and favourite of God, the divine prophet, routed the hordes of adversaries; and now, depicted in the divine elevation at the hands of the sacred ministers, it dispelleth the hordes of the demons and the assemblies of the Jews, and is the reproof of the audacity of the ungodly.

Thy Cross, O our Saviour, is the invincible might of Christians, whereby multitudes of alien nations are vanquished, and the peace of Thy Church, O Christ, is bestowed upon those who render goodly glory. Venerating it now, we entreat Thee, O Thou Who lovest mankind: Count us worthy of a portion with Thy saints.

And 3 of the holy bishop, in the same tone: Spec. Mel.: As one valiant among the martyrs

Like the radiant sun in the heavens, thou didst arise in the East; and passing through the firmament of the Church of Christ, didst shed thy brilliant light upon all who had recourse to thee with faith, setting at last in the far West, whither the providence of God had sent thee to warm the hearts and souls of the English, O glorious Theodore.

From Tarsus of Cilicia thou didst flee before the onslaught of the Moslems, O saint, as from a mighty tempest at sea; and having found a safe haven in the West, in obedience to Christ, the great Merchant, thou didst set forth for the land of England, there to invest the talants entrusted to thee by Him; and since thou didst increase them many fold, thou hast manifestly entered into His joy.

O holy bishop of Christ, thou didst not concern thyself with earthly things, but above all else didst set thy heart on things above. Wherefore, setting forth the sacred canons of the Church, thou didst uproot from among thy sheep and lambs the manifold abuses and vile practices wherewith Satan had ravaged thy flock. And having thus preserved it from the assaults of the spiritual wolf, thou didst present it safe unto Jesus, the Chief Shepherd.

Glory: Idiomelon, in Tone IV

O ye faithful, let us clap our hands in gladness and lift our voices in praise to God for bestowing upon us so great a bishop as the wondrous Theodore, whose apostolic labors in the land of England bore fruit in abundance. For as he ever taught the people the holy virtues and instructed them in the pure doctrine of Christ, they became such good Christians that they aspired only after the joys of the kingdom of heaven, though such had only lately been preached to them.

Now & ever, of the feast, in the same tone

Let us clap our hands today for the victory which is praised with hymns, and with radiant countenance and tongue let us openly cry: O Christ, Who for our sake didst deign to be tried, to be spat upon and scourged and arrayed in a purple robe, and Who ascended the Cross; Whom beholding, the sun and the moon hid their light, and the earth trembled with fear, and the veil of the temple was rent in twain: Do Thou now grant us Thine honored Cross as a preserver and protector, and a dispeller of the demons; that, kissing it, we may all cry out to it: Save us by thy power, O Cross! Hallow us by Thy radiance, O precious Cross! And fortify us by thine exaltation, for thou hast been given to us as the light and salvation of our souls.

Aposticha stichera of the Cross in Tone I: Spec. Mel.: Joy of the ranks of Heaven

The Cross is raised up, and the demons are driven away; the thief openeth the gates of Eden; death is slain, and now is shown to be void; and Christ is magnified. Wherefore, all mortals are glad, for the curse hath been annulled.

Stichos: Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship the footstool of His feet, for it is holy.

Come, all ye who love God, and, beholding the precious Cross uplifted, let us magnify together, and give glory to the one Deliverer and God, crying aloud: O Thou Who wast crucified on the tree of the Cross, disdain not those who entreat Thee.

Stichos: God is our King before the ages; He hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth.

Moses, of old, sweetening bitterness, delivered Israel, prefiguring the Cross in image; and all of us, the faithful, depicting it ever in our hearts in godly manner and mystically, are saved by its might.

And Glory, of the holy bishop: Idiomelon, in Tone V

Assembling the bishops of thy province, O Theodore, with them thou didst condemn the vile heresy of the Monothelites, committing to anathema the accursed Dioscorus and Eutyches, and confirming with all solemnity the decisions of all the Oecumenical Councils, thereby strengthening the walls of thy fold, to keep the reason-endowed sheep of thy flock safe from the spiritual thieves and robbers who sought to steal them from Christ the Lord, the Chief Shepherd.

Now & ever, of the feast, in the same tone

The words of Thy prophets Isaiah and David are fulfilled, O God, which said: All nations will come, O Lord, and bow down before Thee. For, behold the people who have been filled with Thy grace in Thy courts in Jerusalem, O Good One. O Thou Who didst endure the Cross for us and hast imparted life through Thy resurrection, preserve and save us!

Troparion of the saint, in Tone VIII

As a compatriot of the preëminent Paul and a scion of Tarsus, O Theodore, bestowed upon the West by God thou didst traverse afar, proclaiming the peerless Gospel of Christ among the Angles and Saxons. Wherefore, having received thee as a gift divine and great, we cry out in thanksgiving to the Lord on high: Truly wondrous art Thou, O Savior, in Thy holy bishop and in all the saints!

Glory, Now & ever: Troparion of the Cross, in Tone I

O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance; granting victory unto Orthodox Christians over their adversaries, and by the power of Thy Cross preserving Thy commonwealth.

At Matins

At God is the Lord, troparion of the feast, twice; Glory, that of the saint; Now & ever, that of the feast, again.

After the first reading of the Psalter, this sessional hymn, in Tone VII

Bowing down before Thee, O Christ God, in the pine, cedar and cypress, the Church crieth out to Thee: Granting victory over heresy to our bishops through the Theotokos, have mercy upon us.

Glory, Now & ever: the foregoing is repeated.

After the second reading of the Psalter, this sessional hymn, in Tone IV

Shining forth like a light, Thy Cross, O Lord, driveth away legions of the demons and illumineth the faithful who chant: The Cross is the boast of the world!

Glory, Now & ever: the foregoing is repeated.

Canon of the feast, with 8 troparia, including the irmos (see under September 14th); and that of the saint, with 4 troparia, the acrostic whereof is Christ made thee a gift to us, O Theodore, in Tone III

Ode I

Irmos: By a staff Israel of old crossed the cloven sea as though on dry land, for, moving in the form of the Cross, it manifestly prepared a way. Wherefore, let us sing in praise to our wondrous God, for He hath been glorified.

Come, let us praise the wondrous Theodore, the compatriot of Paul and scion of Cilicia, who for many in England manifestly prepared the way to heaven, singing praise to our wondrous God, for He hath been glorified.

Having fled the assaults of the Moslems on thy native land, O venerable one, thou didst find a safe spiritual refuge in the Niridian Monastery, where thou didst chant in praise to our wondrous God, for He hath been glorified.

Renowned for thy piety and knowledge, O saint, thou wast fittingly chosen to succeed the holy Deusdedit in the see of Canterbury; wherefore, with him thou singest to our wondrous God, for He hath been glorified.

Theotokion: In everlasting glory dost thou reign on high, O most pure and blessed Virgin Theotokos, and the supreme spiritual intelligences pay thee fitting homage, for thou gavest birth unto our wondrous God, Who is glorified above all.

Ode III

Irmos: O Thou Who founded the earth upon its firmament and established the heavens with might, make steadfast all of us who praise Thee with faith. Hallowed was the sea by thy passage, O Theodore, gift of God, and hallowed likewise was the earth of Gaul, when thou madest thy way unto thy new flock.

Tireless were thine apostolic labors, O holy bishop, when thou didst visit all the churches of England, making steadfast all who praised God with faith.

Morality and discipline didst thou restore, O most glorious one, and thou didst everywhere establish the paschal reckoning of the holy Council of Nicæa.

Theotokion: Above the firmament is thine abode, O Theotokos, for thou standest in glory at the right hand of thy Son, by thy pleas aiding those who praise thee.

Kontakion of the saint, in Tone I: Spec. Mel.: When the stone had been Sealed

As primate of the English Church thou didst tend well thy spiritual flock, repelling the assaults of the spiritual wolf with the sling of the Orthodox Faith and the staff of sound doctrine. Wherefore, we ever cry out to thee, O Theodore, gift of God: Glory to Him Who hath given thee strength! Glory to Him Who hath crowned thee! Glory to Him Who worketh healings for all through thee!

Sessional hymn of the saint, in Tone I: Spec. Mel.: Thy tomb, O Saviour

Extracting the venom of the Monothelite heresy like a skilled physician, O Saviour, Theodore ably applied the healing poultice of Orthodoxy, proclaiming Thy divinity and manhood to all the people, and crying: We glorify Christ, the Destroyer of death, and we bow down before Him, our one God.

Glory, Now & ever: Sessional hymn of the Cross, in the same tone & melody.

Having heaven as Thy throne on high, in that Thou art God, and bearing the earth as Thy footstool, O Christ our Savior, Thou hast shown us the Cross as the footstool of Thy feet as well. Before it do we all bow down like David, and, having it as a protector and helper, we glorify Thee with faith.

Ode IV

Irmos: Thou hast shown us constant love, O Lord, for Thou didst give Thine only-begotten Son over to death for us. Wherefore, in thanksgiving we cry to Thee: Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Declaring the great truths of the Sacred Scriptures, O holy one, thou didst therewith arm the Christians of England with the keen weaponry of piety; and they cried: Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Ever in awe of the majesty of creation, O divinely wise one, with godly understanding thou didst most diligently impart knowledge, that all might cry: Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Thou wast blessed among peace-makers, O God-bearer; for by thine authority alone thou didst pacify warring Christians; wherefore, in thanksgiving they cried: Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Theotokion: Habbakuk in prophecy proclaimed that thy Son hath established a mighty love of His strength, O Bride of God; wherefore, in thanksgiving we cry unto Him: Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Ode V

Irmos: Raise me up who sing in darkness, O my Benefactor; lighten the darkness of my soul with the light of Thy countenance, O Thou Who lovest mankind; and grant me Thy peace, as Thou once did to the elder, O Immutable One.

Even those who once sat in spiritual darkness and shadow didst thou teach to sing the splendid hymns of the Church, which the holy bishop Gregory devised and bequeathed unto Christians, O Theodore who art most rich.

Effulgent with the radiance of the countenance of Christ Who loveth mankind, with the radiance of the Spirit thou didst illumine the English people, enlightening their darkness and bringing peace to their benighted souls, O saint.

Angles derived great profit from thy sacred ministrations, O holy bishop, and Saxons cast their spiritual gloom from off themselves; for through thee, O hallowed Theodore, were their souls filled with divine radiance.

Theotokion: Glory dawned from thy pure womb, O Virgin Mother, shedding light upon us who sleep in darkness; wherefore, rejoicing, we wake unto the Sun of righteousness.

Ode VI

Irmos: O Thou Who lovest mankind, disdain not those who have reached the end of time and are assailed with destruction by the threefold billows of perils, yet cry: O Savior, save us, as Thou didst save the prophet from the sea monster.

In thine archpastoral oversight thou didst faithfully lead the life of thy sheep up out of corruption unto the Lord, O Theodore; for they were perishing in the depths of the raging sea of evils, and the floods thereof encompassed them.

Foundering under the assault of the threefold billows of afflictions, the faithful of England well nigh perished in the uttermost abyss and the womb of hades; but thy cry came unto the Lord, and He saved thy flock from dire perils.

The Christians of these latter times are likewise assailed by grave trials and temptations, and many observe vain and false things and have abandoned mercy for themselves; but we cry unto thee: Save us by thy supplications, O saint.

Theotokion: To the cry of our desperation do thou hearken, O Lady Mother of God, for, beset by perils, we are engulfed in the abyss; but pray thou to thy merciful Son: O Savior, save these my servants, as Thou didst save the prophet from the sea monster!

Kontakion of the Cross, in Tone IV: Automelon

O Thou Who wast lifted up willingly upon the Cross, bestow Thy compassions upon the new community called after Thee, O Christ God; gladden by Thy power Orthodox Christians, granting them victory over all adversaries. May they have as an ally the invincible trophy, the weapon of peace.

Ikos: He who was caught up to the third heaven of paradise and heard unspeakable and divine words which the human tongue cannot utter, what writeth he to the Galatians, which, as lover of the Scriptures, ye have both read and come to understand? 'God forbid', saith he, 'that I should glory, save only in the Cross of the Lord', whereon having suffered He slew the passions..

Let us all then firmly hold this boast, the Cross of the Lord; for this Wood is our salvation, the invincible trophy, the weapon of peace.

Ode VII

Irmos: Proud was the tyrant; yet he was as a plaything for the children; for, trampling underfoot the flame heated sevenfold, they sang: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers!

Obedience and all the monastic virtues didst thou embody, O all-glorious Theodore, wherefore thou didst trample pride and vainglory underfoot, quenching the flame of the passions.

Unto the youth of England didst thou impart sacred knowledge, O saint, that, trampling ignorance underfoot, they might sing: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers!

Surrounding thyself with men of holiness, O holy Theodore, thou wast like a diamond of great brilliance in a crown of priceless gems, crying: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers!

Theotokion: O immaculate Maiden, though we have sinned and transgressed in departing from the Son, beseech Him to spurn us not, that we may sing to Him: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers!

Ode VIII

Irmos: In Babylon, the children, enduring to worship the living God, paid no heed to the musical instruments; and, standing in the midst of the flame, they sang a hymn divine, saying: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Thou didst fight the good fight; thou didst finish thy course, and, worshipping the living God, didst keep well the Holy Faith, O Theodore; wherefore, thou dost admonish us, saying: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Having been vigilant in all things, O holy Theodore, thou didst endure afflictions in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ, and therein making full proof of thy ministry, thou didst cry: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Endless praises dost thou chant unto the Most High with the ranks of angels and the choirs of the saints in the heavenly habitations, O Theodore, gift of God, crying aloud: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Theotokion: O thy supernal beauty! O the beautiful sound of thine incomparable voice, wherewith thou intercedest on high with thy Son and God for us sinners, who sing the hymn divine: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Ode IX

Irmos: The Assyrian flame was a figure of thee, O Virgin Mother Mary; for the flame of the Godhead, dwelling within thee, O pure one, preserved thy womb unconsumed. Wherefore, Christ, Who was brought into the temple in Thine arms, hath restored us who magnify Thy birthing.

Departing from Cilicia in the East, O Theodore, thou madest thy way into the West, where thou didst preserve well the flock entrusted to thy vigilant care; wherefore, as thou hast great boldness before Christ, in thine prayers beg that East and West be again united in spirit and in Truth.

Out of the blasphemies of our age deliver us, O saint of God, for as the Apostle foretold, we are verily beset by the unholy, who, though they assume the guise of godliness, deny the power thereof. By thine aid help us to turn away from such, who are reprobates concerning the Holy Faith.

Rightly hast thou received from the righteous Judge the crown of righteousness laid up for those who love His appearing, O righteous Theodore; for at all times and seasons thou didst diligently reprove, rebuke and exhort thy flock with all long-suffering and sound doctrine.

Theotokion: Elder Symeon blessed thee, O all-holy Theotokos, when thou broughtest the preëternal Babe to the Temple to be dedicated to God. And he prophesied truly, for the men of all ages to come, that thy Child would be a sign which shall be spoken against. Wherefore, we magnify thy birthing.

Exapostilarion: *Spec. Mel: By the Spirit in the sanctuary*

By the Holy Spirit wast thou ordained to be the primate of the English Church, O Theodore; wherefore, thou didst boldly preach Christ the Master to thy flock, as the Way, the Truth and the Light, the expectation of the nations and the salvation of the New Israel, His people.

Glory, Now & ever: Exapostilarion of the feast

The Cross is the preservation of the whole world; the Cross is the adornment of the Church; the Cross is the might of kings; the Cross is the confirmation of the faithful; the Cross is the glory of angels and the wounding of demons.

Aposticha of the feast, in Tone VI: Spec. Mel.: On the third day

We bow down before the place where the feet of Christ stood, exalting the thrice-blessed Cross whereon was shed the blood of the Master Who hath poured forth resurrection upon the world.

Stichos: Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship the footstool of His feet, for it is holy.

Having mortified the passions of the flesh and spirit, having crucified yourselves with Christ the Master, O ye divinely wise, let us strive to elevate ourselves, through the elevation of the Cross, to the rest of heaven.

Stichos: God is our King before the ages; He hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth.

A life-bearing fountain hath manifestly welled forth from the divine side of the Savior, giving drink to the souls of those who with faith worship His divine Passion, Cross and Resurrection.

Glory: Idiomelon, in Tone VIII

Having toiled untiringly for Christ thy Master, O Theodore, death brought thee rest from thy pious labors. But though thy sacred remains were entombed in Canterbury, thou dwellest ever in supernal light in the radiant mansions of heaven, from whence thou lookest with pity upon thy flock and aidest them by thine earnest entreaties before the glorious throne of the All-holy Trinity.

Now & ever, of the feast, in Tone V

The words of Thy prophets Isaiah and David are fulfilled, O God, which said: All nations will come, O Lord, and bow down before Thee. For, behold the people who have been filled with Thy grace in Thy courts in Jerusalem, O Good One. O Thou Who didst endure the Cross for us and hast imparted life through Thy resurrection, preserve and save us!

At the Liturgy

At the Beatitudes, 6 troparia from Ode VII of the canon of the feast Prokimenon of the feast, in Tone V

O Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance.

Stichos: Unto Thee, O Lord, will I cry; O my God, be not silent unto me.

And that of the holy bishop, in Tone I

My mouth shall speak wisdom, and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.

Epistle to the Hebrews, §318 (Heb. 7: 26-8: 2)

Brethren: Such a High Priest became us, Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this He did once, when He offered up Himself..

For the law maketh men high priests who have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, Who is consecrated for evermore. Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a High Priest, Who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

Alleluia of the feast, in Tone IV

Stichos: Remember Thy congregation which Thou hast purchased from the beginning.

Stichos: God is our King before the ages, He hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth.

And that of the holy bishop, in Tone II

Stichos: The mouth of the righteous shall meditate wisdom, and his tongue shall speak of judgment.

Gospel according to John, § 36 (Jn. 10: 9-16)

The Lord said to the Jews who came to Him: I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he who is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

Communion verse of the feast

The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, hath been signed upon us. And that of the holy bishop.

In everlasting remembrance shall the righteous be, he shall not be afraid of evil tidings.