

St Menas

The Wonder Worker



Commemorated November 11.

Ἀπολυτίκιον Μηνᾶ, Βικτωρίου και Βικεντίου Μεγαλομαρτύρων

Fourth Tone

Οι Μάρτυρές σου, Κύριε, εν τῇ ἀθλήσει αὐτῶν, στεφάνους εκομίσαντο τῆς ἀφθαρσίας, εκ σοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ ημῶν, σχόντες γάρ τήν ἰσχύν σου, τοὺς τυράννους καθείλον, ἔθραυσαν καί δαιμόνων, τὰ ἀνίσχυρα θράση. Αὐτῶν ταῖς ἱκεσίαις, Χριστέ ο Θεός, σώσον τὰς ψυχὰς ημῶν.

Apolytikion of Martyr Menas

Fourth Tone

Thy Martyrs, O Lord, in their courageous contest for Thee received as the prize the crowns of incorruption and life from Thee, our immortal God. For since they possessed Thy strength, they cast down the tyrants and wholly destroyed the demons' strengthless presumption. O Christ God, by their prayers, save our souls, since Thou art merciful.

Κοντάκιον Μηνᾶ, Βικτωρίου και Βικεντίου Μεγαλομαρτύρων

Plagal of the Fourth Tone

Ὡς εὐσεβείας Μάρτυρας, καί ἀθλητάς θεόφρονας, ἡ Ἐκκλησία γεραίρει δοξάζουσα, τοὺς θείους ἄθλους σήμερον, Μηνᾶ τοῦ ἀθλοφόρου, Βίκτωρος τοῦ γενναίου, καί Βικεντίου τοῦ γενναίοφρονος· καί ποθοῦσα κραυγάζει, δοξάζουσα τόν φιλόανθρωπον.

Kontakion of Martyr Menas

Plagal of the Fourth Tone

As godly-minded athletes and Martyrs who strove for piety, the Church doth honour and glorify this day the godly contests and travails of Menas the prizewinner, noble Victor, brave Vincent, and valiant Stephanie, and lovingly doth cry out and glorify Christ, the Friend of man.

Introduction

Today, we celebrate one of the most beloved Egyptian saints, The Holy Great Martyr Menas (**Mēnás**) of Egypt, an Egyptian by birth, **born in 285 A.D.**, in the city of Niceous (Nakiyos or Nikiu), which lies in the vicinity of Memphis. The Holy Great-Martyr Menas, a wonderworker who continues to pour forth miracles upon the faithful. The treasure we call Menas is far greater than any gilded death mask or mausoleum built to house a royal corpse, and St Menas not only lives in Christ, but cares for us, intercedes for us, and defends us in our earthly lives.

Parents

His parents were real ascetic Christians; his father's name was Audexios (or Eudoxius) and his mother's name was Aufimia (or Euphemia).

His father, Eudoxius, was a native of the city of Nakiyos (Nikiu) and was its Governor. His brother was envious of him and he brought charges against him before the Emperor. The Emperor transferred him to Afrikia and appointed him Governor over it. The people were pleased with him because he was merciful and God-fearing.

One day Aufimia went to church on the feast of our Lady, the Virgin, the Mother of God, at Attribes. She saw the children in the church wearing their beautiful clothes with their parents. She heaved a sigh and wept before the icon of Our Lady St. Mary, entreating her to intercede for her before her beloved Son, in order that He would give her a son. A voice came from the icon saying, "**Amen.**" **and thus she decided to call her son Menas.** She rejoiced in what she had heard and realized that the Lord had heard her prayers. When she returned to her home and told her husband about it, he replied, "May God's Will be done."

The Lord gave them this saint and they called him Menas, according to the voice that his mother heard. When he grew, his parents taught him reading and writing and they reared him in a Christian manner. When he was eleven years old, his father departed at a good old age. Then his mother departed three years later. St. Menas devoted his life to fasting, praying and to living a Christian life. Because of everyone's love towards him and his father, they placed him in his father's position. In spite of that, he did not forsake his worshipping.

When he came of age, he enlisted in the ranks of the soldiery. He served in the imperial army in Cotyaeus in Phrygia. Saint Menas became a military officer who served in the Kotyaeion region of Phrygia under the centurion Firmilian during the reign of the emperors Diocletian (284-305) and Maximian (305-311). At that time a commander called Phirmelianus mustered troops and went to the Barbary Coast- as North Africa was then known, to protect it from incursions. One of those he took was Saint Menas, who was praised and admired for his bravery in battle, his patience, and his self-discipline.

Menas left for the Mountains

When Diocletian had reneged Christianity and issued his orders to worship idols, many were martyred for the Name of the Lord Christ. St. Menas left his position and went to the desert, where he stayed many days worshipping God with all his heart.

In 298, the Emperors published an edict ordering everyone to worship the idols. Those serving in the Legions were ordered to capture and persecute Christians. As soon as Saint Menas heard this impious decree he threw down his soldier's belt (a sign of military rank) and withdrew to a mountain above Kotyaeion, where he lived an ascetical life of fasting and prayer. He spent a long time in the wilderness, suffering great privation and laboring in feats of prayer, fasting, and nocturnal vigils. Thus, the Saint purified himself of every passion of soul and body.

When his heart was strengthened with godly zeal, and his soul aflame with love for God, divine grace came upon him and he had a vision he saw the heavens open and the martyrs crowned with beautiful crowns. He heard a voice saying, **"He who toils for the Name of the Lord Christ shall receive these crowns."** He regarded this as a sign that he was to follow the path of martyrdom. Therefore, he left the mountain and went into the city, where the people were celebrating a pagan festival.

Menas Returned to the City & Confession before the Governor

One day, when the pagans were holding high festival, he came down from the mountain and preached Christ the true God to the crowd, saying:

"Know well that the true God is One and that what you worship are lifeless bits of wood".

Everyone gathered around him, questioning how he dared to present himself there by himself, but those who were secret Christians rejoiced at the saint's courage. The pagans seized the Saint and beat him, before dragging him before Pyrrhus, the governor of the city. Pyrrhus respected the saint because of his age. He was then fifty years old and because of the venerable figure he made. So he asked him calmly: "Who are you, my man? Where are you from and what's your religion?"

"My homeland is Egypt", replied the saint, **"my name is Menas and I was once a soldier. But because you're impious and pagans, I left the forces and went up onto the mountain. Now I've come here to present myself before all of you and to confess my faith in Christ, so that He will also confess me to be His servant in the kingdom of heaven, as He Himself says: 'Whoever confesses me before other people, I will confess before my Father in heaven'"**.

Pyrrhus was angered and ordered the imprisonment of Menas until he could decide how to put him to death.

The next morning, when the festival was over, the governor again had the saint brought to him and charged him with two misdemeanors. **First** that he had left the service of the emperor in the army, and **second** that he had dared to speak with impiety to such a large crowd during the course of the festival.

The saint then spoke boldly in his defense:

"Yes, governor, this is how we have to confess openly and with courage and not to be

afraid of those who “kill the body but are unable to kill the soul” (Matth. 10, 28).

We should proclaim Him with our hearts and words, as the Apostle Paul instructs us, saying:

“Indeed, those who believe with their hearts are brought to righteousness, and those who confess with their mouths are brought to salvation” (Rom. 1, 10).

“I see, Menas, that you’re not so young and foolish as to be unable to understand your own best interests. You’re already elderly. Don’t be so stupid as to abandon sweet life for death. Think sensibly and you’ll be honored by the emperor, and the gods will forgive you for cursing them yesterday”.

The saint laughed at these words and responded: **“Nothing can separate me from the love of Christ. Not honors, not tortures Try me, if you want to see”.**

Harsh Tortures

Pyrrhus then addressed the soldiers very angrily: “Seize that infidel, stretch his limbs and beat him mercilessly, so that he can enjoy what he asked for”. **The soldiers changed shift three times as they became tired, but the saint endured manfully,** to the extent that they were all amazed and admired him.

An old friend of the saint, a soldier called Pigasios, looked at the sorely wounded body of the saint and went to speak to him: “Can’t you see your body’s falling apart from the wounds. Do you want to die needlessly? Just tell them that you’ll make the sacrifice and your god will forgive you, because he’ll see you’re doing it against your will”.

The saint replied indignantly: **“Depart from me all who work iniquity (Ps. 6, 9). Leave me alone, because you’re an enemy of the truth and not a friend. I worship Christ alone and He’ll fortify me to bear the wounds”.**

When Pyrrhus saw that the saint was unflinching in his resistance, he ordered that he be hung up, vertically on a stake, with iron nails to tear at his flesh. While the saint was undergoing this harsh torture, the governor mocked him, saying: “Can you feel any pain in your body, Menas, or would you like us to add more punishments. so that you can enjoy yourself more?”.

“Do you think you’ll separate me from the true faith with games like this?”, the saint replied.

“Stop being so pig-headed, Menas, and declare allegiance to Emperor Maximian”, Pyrrhus advised him.

“Governor, I won’t deny the eternal and heavenly king, in order to bow down before something earthly that decays”.

Seeing the saint’s resolution, he tried to win him over in a different way.

“Who’s this eternal king, Menas?”.

“Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to Whom the earth and the heavens are subject”.

“Don’t you know that this name makes emperors furious and that they order us to punish without mercy?”.

“It doesn’t bother me if the emperors get angry. I don’t think about it. My purpose is to die confessing Christ, as Saint Paul says: ‘Who will separate us from the love of Christ; sorrow, consternation, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger or the sword?’” (Rom. 8, 37).

After this, Menas underwent a series of tortures. They rubbed his wounded body with a hair cloth and burned his limbs with lighted candles. As he was being tortured, he said: **“Today I’m shedding this hide of sin and am donning the bright raiment of the Kingdom of God. I have Christ as my helper, Who told us not to fear”.**

Pyrrhus couldn’t comprehend the behavior of the martyr and told him: “Tell me Menas, how did you become so wise, and can answer like this, given that you were once a soldier and used to wars and slaughter?”.

“God gives me the wisdom to confound your impiety; He said that when we are brought before tyrants, we should not worry what we’re going to say: ‘for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict” (Luke 21, 15).

“Did your Christ know that Christians would be punished by us?”, asked Pyrrhus.

“Since He’s the true God, of course He knew”.

The governor now had no idea what else to say, but again tried to achieve his goal:

“Never mind the useless words, Menas. Choose one of the two: either friendship, which will win you your life, or confession of your Christ, which will earn you death”.

“I was with Christ, I am and I shall be always”.

“I’m sorry to have to put you to death, Menas. You’ve got an hour to think it over and decide your fate”.

“Give me ten years and I won’t decide anything else: to proclaim Christ as God and your gods as bits of wood and demons”.

The Saint’s Martyr’s Death

The tortures continued even more harshly until one of the governor’s soldiers, Iliodoros by name, said to Pyrrhus:

“My Lord, as you know, the Christians are very stubborn . To be free of him, order him to be beheaded”.

Pyrrhus agreed and gave orders that Menas be put to death by decapitation.

As the saint walked to the place of his execution he told some secret Christians who were accompanying him:

“Please retrieve my body and take it to Egypt”.

When they reached the appointed spot, the martyr lifted up his hands and prayed, saying:

“I thank You, Lord, that You have found me worthy to become a participant in sufferings. I thank You that You kept me steadfast in my confession. I beg You, receive my soul in Your

kingdom”. These were the saint’s last words. He was decapitated on **11 November**.

Finally, Pyrrhus ordered his head to be cut off with the sword, his body to be cast in the fire and his ashes to be scattered in the wind. The body remained in the fire for three days and three nights, but it was not harmed.



After his Death

His sister came and gave the soldiers a lot of money and they let her take the body. She put it in a sack made of fronds and decided to go to Alexandria, as her brother had previously advised her. She embarked with her brother's body on one of the ships to Alexandria. During their trip, sea beasts came out of the water and attacked the passengers aboard the ship. They were frightened and screamed with fear. The Saint's sister prayed to the Lord and asked for the intercession of her brother. While the passengers were in fear, fire went forth from her brother's body and burned the faces of the beasts. They dived immediately into the water and as they reappeared, the fire burned them again. They finally dived and did not reappear. When the **ship arrived at the city of Alexandria**, most of the people went out with the father, the Patriarch. They carried the holy body with reverence and honor and entered the city with a venerable celebration and placed it in the church, after they shrouded it in expensive shrouds.

When the time of persecution ended, **the angel of the Lord appeared to the honorable Patriarch, Anba Athanasius**, the Apostolic. The angel informed him of the Lord's command which was to place the body of St. Menas on a camel and to take it out of the city without letting anyone lead it, but to follow it from a distance until it stopped at a place that the Lord had designated. They walked behind the camel until they arrived at a place called Lake Bayad, in the district of Marriot. There they heard a voice saying, "This is the place where the Lord wishes the body of his beloved Menas to be placed." They lowered the body and placed it in a coffin, then they situated it in a beautiful garden and

many miracles happened through the body.

Later on, the **people of Pentapolis** (the five cities) rose against the cities around Alexandria. The people were getting ready to face the Berbers, and the Governor decided to take the body of St. Menas with him to be his deliverer and his strong protector. He took the body secretly and through the blessings of this saint, he overcame the Berbers and returned victorious.

The Governor decided not to return the body of the Saint to its original place and **wanted to take it to Alexandria**. On the way back, they passed by **Lake Bayad, St. Menas's original place**. The camel carrying the body knelt down and would not move in spite of frequent beatings. They moved the body over another camel, but again this second camel did not move from its place. The Governor finally realized that this was the Lord's command. He made a coffin from decay-resistant wood and placed the silver coffin in it. He then returned it to its place and invoked St. Menas's blessings, then returned to his city.

When the Lord wanted to disclose the location of St. Menas's holy body, He did it in this manner. There was a shepherd in the desert. One day a **sheep with mange** slipped down into the water of a well near the place of the saint's body. The sheep then came out of the water and rolled over in the sand of that place, and instantly the sheep was healed. When the shepherd saw this miracle, he was amazed. He took some of the sand and mixed it with water and smeared it over every sheep with mange, as well as on those with other infirmities, and immediately they were healed.

The news of these miracles spread in all the countries until the **Emperor of Constantinople heard of them**. He had an **only daughter and she was leprous**. Her father sent her to the place where the saint's body was and she inquired from the shepherd how these miracles were happening. She took some of the sand, moistened it with water, smeared it on her body and slept the night in that place. In her sleep **she saw St. Menas saying to her, "Arise early and dig in this place, and you will find my body."** When she woke up, **she found herself cured**. She began digging as she was told and she found the holy body. She sent word to her father, informing him of the news. The Emperor rejoiced exceedingly, thanked the Lord and glorified His Name. He then sent men and money and built a church in that place and it was consecrated.

When **Arcadius and Honorius reigned**, they ordered a city to be built there. Multitudes of people came to that church asking for the intercession of the blessed St. Menas. **The Lord had honored him with many signs and wonders that appeared from his pure body**. When the Arabs came to Egypt, some of them attacked the city and the church was destroyed, only ruins remained. When His Grace, the late Pope Abba Kyrillos the Sixth was ordained Patriarch over the See of St. Mark, he took interest in building a large monastery in this area (Marriot) in the name of St. Menas. He spent a great deal of money in establishing it. There are now many churches in the monastery, visited by many Orthodox worshippers who go there to receive blessings and to pray. He also bought one hundred acres of land and built a fence around it. He ordained a number of monks who had a high degree of scientific and religious education. May His intercession be for us and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.



Miracles

In the words of the Synaxarion:

“In June 1942, during the North-Africa campaign that was decisive for the outcome of the Second World War, the German forces under the command of General Rommel were on their way to Alexandria, and happened to make a halt near a place which the Arabs call El-Alamein after Saint Menas. An ancient, ruined church there was dedicated to the Saint; and there some people say he is buried. Here the weaker Allied forces including some Greeks confronted the numerically and militarily superior German army, and the result of the coming battle seemed certain. During the first night of engagement, Saint Menas appeared in the midst of the German camp at the head of a caravan of camels, exactly as he was shown on the walls of the ruined church in one of the frescoes depicting his miracles. This astounding and terrifying apparition so undermined German morale that it contributed to the brilliant victory of the Allies. The Church of Saint Menas was restored in thanksgiving and a small monastery was established there.”

The Allies offered that place to Patriarch Christophoros of Alexandria so that the church of Saint Menas could be rebuilt. How many Allied soldiers owe their lives to the miraculous intercession and intervention of St Menas will never be known.

We pray to Saint Menas to ask for his help in finding lost objects.