

FORTY HOLY MARTYRS OF SEBASTE

On today's bulletin, we highlight a group of 40 faithful souls who suffered Martyrdom for their Lord. The story unfolds in the year 320 A.d. during the reign of Emperor Licinius. A garrison of Roman soldiers were stationed in a remote Armenian town. While they were courageous warriors, they were also devout Christians. Upon hearing of them, the infuriated Emperor issued an edict, stating that those throughout the Empire who would not worship pagan gods whould be tortured and put to death. Additional soldiers were sent to Sebaste to see exactly where the loyalties of these 40 Christians stood.

We are told that they all refused to reject Christ. A cruel death was planned for them. It was bitterly cold in Sebaste at this time of the year. They were forced to remove their clothes and stand in the freezing lake looking across the waters at the glowing fires of the pagans – where they could go if they would renounce the Lord. One of the group finally weakened and adandoned the contest. As death approached, a band of angels came down from heavena and placed crowns on their heads. It is said that one of the Roman guards was so moved by this glorious sight that he removed his own garments and rushed to die at the side of these Christian warriors. This retained their total at 40.

A prayer mentioning the 40 Holy Martyrs of Sebaste is included in the Wedding Service. It is placed there to remind the bride and groom that crowns await them in Heaven also if they remain as faithful to Christ as these saints of long ago.