



# St. Epaminondas

Martyred with St. Terence

April 10th

The Holy Martyr Terence and his companions suffered under the emperor Decius (249 -251). The emperor issued an edict commanding all subjects to offer sacrifice to the pagan idols.

When the governor of Africa Fortunianus received this edict, he gathered the people into the city square, set out cruel instruments of torture and declared that everyone without exception had to offer the sacrifice

to the idols.

Many, afraid of torture, complied. However, St Terence and forty other Christians bravely affirmed their faith in the Savior and ridiculed the idols. Fortunianus was amazed at their boldness and he asked how they as rational people, could confess as God, One Whom the Jews crucified as a malefactor.

St Terence answered that their belief was in the Savior, Who voluntarily endured death on the Cross and rose on the third day. Fortunianus saw that Terence inspired the others by his example, and so he ordered him to be isolated in prison with his three closest companions: Africanus, Maximus, and Pompeius. Fortunianus was determined to force the rest of the martyrs, including Zeno, Alexander and Theodore, to renounce Christ.

Neither threats nor terrible tortures could sway the holy martyrs. They burned them with red-hot iron, they poured vinegar on the wounds, they sprinkled on salt, and they raked them with iron claws. In spite of their sufferings, the saints did not weaken in their confession of Christ, and the Lord gave them strength.

Fortunianus gave orders to lead the martyrs into the pagan temple, and once again he urged them to offer sacrifice to the idols. The valiant warriors of Christ cried out, "O Almighty God, Who once sent down fire on Sodom for its iniquity, destroy this impious temple of idolatry." The idols fell down with a crash, and then the temple lay in ruins. The enraged governor gave orders to execute them, and the martyrs, glorifying God, bowed their necks beneath the executioner's sword.

After the execution of the thirty-six martyrs, Fortunianus summoned Terence, Maximus, Africanus and Pompeius before him. He showed them the martyrs' bodies and again urged them to offer sacrifice to the idols. The martyrs refused. The governor put heavy chains on them, and gave orders to starve them to death. By night, an angel of the Lord removed the martyrs' chains and fed them.

In the morning, the guards found the saints cheerful and strong. Then Fortunianus ordered sorcerers and conjurers to carry snakes and all kinds of poisonous creatures into the prison. The guards looked into the cell through an opening in the ceiling and saw the martyrs unharmed, praying, and the snakes crawling at their feet. When the sorcerers opened the door of the prison cell, the snakes bit them. The furious Fortunianus gave orders to behead the holy martyrs. Christians took up their holy bodies and buried them with reverence outside the city.