

SYNAXARIA OF THE TRIODION

by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos

FIRST SATURDAY of LENT

On this day, the Saturday of the First Week of the Fast, we celebrate the wondrous miracle wrought through *Kollyva* by the holy and glorious Great Martyr Theodore the Recruit.

Verses

The Recruit entertaineth the city with the nourishment of *Kollyva*,
Thereby rendering the polluted delicacies ineffective.

Synaxarion

When Julian the Apostate, who ruled over the Empire after Constantios, the son of Constantine the Great, had departed from Christ to idolatry, a mighty persecution was stirred up against Christians, both openly and secretly. Refraining from inflicting savage or inhuman punishments on them, the ungodly Emperor tempted the Christians in the following way: feeling shame, and at the same time suspecting that more might be added to their numbers if he persecuted them openly, the crafty and impious man plotted somehow to pollute them secretly.

Observing that our Christian race purifies itself and devotes itself to God more during the First Week of the Fast, he summoned the Eparch of the city and ordered him to remove the food that was usually for sale and to set out other comestibles in the marketplace, namely bread and beverages, having first mixed these with the blood from his sacrificial offerings, polluting them in the process, so that, when the Christians purchased them during the Fast, they might be defiled rather than cleansed. The Eparch carried out his order immediately and set out all over the marketplace the food and drink that had been polluted with blood from the sacrifices.

But the all-seeing eye of God, Who catches the wise of this world in their cleverness and ever provides for us, His servants, destroyed the loathsome devices directed against us by the Apostate. He dispatched His Great Trophy-bearer, Theodore the Recruit, to Evdioxios, the Archbishop of the city, who had obtained this office improperly.

Standing before Evdioxios, not in a dream, but while he was awake, St. Theodore spoke words such as these: "Arise with all speed and gather together the flock of Christ, and order them under no circumstances to buy

any of the items set out in the marketplace; for they have been polluted by the most impious Emperor with blood from his sacrificial offerings.” Puzzled by this, the Archbishop asked: “And how can those who do not have abundant provisions in their homes easily avoid buying food from the marketplace?” “Provide them with *Kollyva*,” the Saint replied, “to relieve them in their time of need.” Puzzled again, and not knowing what *Kollyva* was, Evdoxios asked the Saint for an explanation. The great Theodore replied: “It is boiled wheat; for this is what we are accustomed to calling it in Evchaïta.” When the Archbishop inquired who precisely this provider for the Christian people might be, the Saint answered: “I am Theodore, the Martyr of Christ, Who has just now sent me to aid you.”

The Archbishop arose at once and announced what he had seen to the multitude. By acting thus, he preserved Christ’s flock unharmed by the machination of their enemy, the Apostate. When Julian saw that his trickery had been exposed, that he had accomplished nothing, and that he had been sufficiently put to shame, he ordered the usual comestibles to be put back in the marketplace.

At the end of the week, the Christian people gave thanks to their benefactor, the Martyr, and joyously celebrated his memorial on this Saturday with *Kollyva*. Ever since then, and up until now, we faithful revive this miracle, lest the Martyr’s great deed become forgotten with the passage of time, and celebrate the memory of the Great Theodore with *Kollyva*.

By his intercessions, O God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.

