

**27 DECEMBRIE
NATALIA GARLAND**

**ACATISTUL
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Akathist Hymn to Saint Stephen the Protomartyr

Kontakion 1

You are abundantly fruitful in Your saints, O God, for You uplift Your servants who do Your holy will and thereby illuminate mankind with the eternal truths of the Church. We see truth shining brilliantly through the life and death of the blessed deacon, Saint Stephen, and so we declare:

Rejoice, Saint Stephen, preacher of truth and first martyr of the Church.

Ikos 1

Saint Stephen, you are rightly recognized for your aid to the people, your words of divine truth before corrupt authorities, and your forgiveness of your persecutors. You were falsely accused of blasphemy and then stoned to death, and therefore we honor you as the first of the Christian martyrs:

Rejoice, for your earthly death gave witness to Heavenly truth.

Rejoice, for your brief life ended with everlasting fruitfulness.

Rejoice, for your speech was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Rejoice, for your voice proclaimed the miracles of God.

Rejoice, for your faith excelled upon righteous suffering.

Rejoice, for your valor increased under brutal persecution.

Rejoice, for you served as a deacon without reproach.

Rejoice, for you performed your duties regardless of risk.

Rejoice, for you toiled with enduring dedication.

Rejoice, for you preached as an irrefutable saint.

Rejoice, for you believed in the merciful sovereignty of the Father.

Rejoice, for you demonstrated the sacrificial love of the Son.

Rejoice, Saint Stephen, preacher of truth and first martyr of the Church.

Kontakion 2

It was your manner, Saint Stephen, to impart the message of Jesus Christ through exact teachings, personal example, and heartfelt prayer. You wanted by all means to save souls, for you loved Christ Who came to save sinners. Therefore, you cheerfully took up your cross and said: Alleluia.

Ikos 2

Help us, most splendid deacon, to save souls with our true words and virtuous conduct, as well as our fervent prayers. We entreat you to teach us to respond, in righteous ways, to each person on our spiritual path. May no one go unnoticed for whom the Son of God gave His life:

Rejoice, for your heart and mind were united in purpose.

Rejoice, for your soul delighted in pleasing Your Creator.

Rejoice, for your daily tasks were rooted in love of mankind.

Rejoice, for your prayers abounded in intercession for the needy.

Rejoice, for your strength was replenished even as you labored.

Rejoice, for your purity was evident in the face of hostility.

Rejoice, for you flourished as a spiritual branch of the True Vine.

Rejoice, for you did all things as unto Christ Himself.

Rejoice, for you lived sacredly and feared not death by man.

Rejoice, for you devoted your every breath to divine truth.

Rejoice, for you cared for those who could give nothing in return.

Rejoice, for you understood the rewards of genuine humility.

Rejoice, Saint Stephen, preacher of truth and first martyr of the Church.

Kontakion 3

In those days, after the Crucifixion of Christ, after His Resurrection and Ascension, the Twelve Apostles preached on these things and had other pressing duties. Hence, they appointed seven deacons to dispense food and supplies to those in need, that all might say: Alleluia.

Ikos 3

Saint Stephen, you were appointed deacon along with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicholas, and you were senior among them. We therefore refer to you as the Archdeacon Stephen, and we wish to emulate your commitment and attentiveness to the needs of others:

Rejoice, for your love of God was manifested in practical service.

Rejoice, for your aid to the poor was combined with earnest prayer.

Rejoice, for your habit was to think of God in all your activities.

Rejoice, for your prayers were unceasing for the growth of the churches.

Rejoice, for your concern was for the unfortunate and also the wicked.

Rejoice, for your goal was to prepare the least ones for Heaven.

Rejoice, for you worked in full cooperation with the apostles.

Rejoice, for you were chosen by the Twelve to be included in the Seven.

Rejoice, for you showed excellence of character in all relationships.

Rejoice, for you worshipped in good conscience with the congregation.

Rejoice, for you participated in the structuring of the early Church.

Rejoice, for you desired only to be interconnected within the whole.

Rejoice, Saint Stephen, preacher of truth and first martyr of the Church.

Kontakion 4

It was your manner, Saint Stephen, since you were filled with the Holy Spirit, to work signs and wonders. This was not a question of personal ambition, or you would have been doomed to downfall, but the fulfilling of your sacred gift and unselfish disposition, for you said:
Alleluia.

Ikos 4

Help us, most glorious deacon, to be what God intended us to be, to work out our salvation and to spread glad tidings. There are strangers in need of prayer, a world in need of witness, children in need of example, neighbors in need of food and a friend, and so we endeavor to follow Christ:

Rejoice, for you depended on God for spiritual ears and eyes.

Rejoice, for you perceived life through Christ's mercy and humility.

Rejoice, for you utilized your gifts for the sake of the Kingdom.

Rejoice, for you wanted every person to inherit eternal life.

Rejoice, for you ate at the table with friends and sinners.

Rejoice, for you commiserated with all those in need of salvation.

Rejoice, for your comings and goings reflected Godly wisdom.

Rejoice, for your daily routine was a blessing to everyone around you.

Rejoice, for your rising in the morning brought sunlight to the city.

Rejoice, for your sleeping at night was interspersed with prayers.

Rejoice, for your demeanor was molded by doctrine and virtue.

Rejoice, for your diaconate was a source of nurturing interactions.

Rejoice, Saint Stephen, preacher of truth and first martyr of the Church.

Kontakion 5

At that time, after the apostles appointed the deacons, after the division of labor and the sharing of responsibilities, the word of God spread without addition to or subtraction from its authenticity. We therefore give thanks for these great and humble men, for they knew how to say: Alleluia.

Ikos 5

Saint Stephen, the apostles prayed over you and laid hands on you, before God and Heaven, and as such you never misrepresented the Church nor usurped the apostles. Many people then became Christians throughout Jerusalem, but others felt offended and became argumentative:

Rejoice, for you held yourself accountable for your words and deeds.

Rejoice, for you gladly arose to every challenge and encounter.

Rejoice, for you were one of the Seven and then among All Saints.

Rejoice, for you labored so that the Name of Christ might be magnified.

Rejoice, for you projected peace and goodwill to Greeks and Jews.

Rejoice, for you suffered repercussions from corrupt authorities.

Rejoice, for your trust was in the divine purpose of the Almighty.

Rejoice, for your entire being was devoted to the message of salvation.

Rejoice, for your knowledge of truth was integrated into heart and mind.

Rejoice, for your love of people was generous and sacrificial.

Rejoice, for your application of the virtues was toward one and all.

Rejoice, for your obedience to the Church was daily and forever.

Rejoice, Saint Stephen, preacher of truth and first martyr of the Church.

Kontakion 6

It was your manner, Saint Stephen, as a man of good reputation and filled with righteousness, to confront error and wickedness while living in truth and goodness. Although you were kind and forgiving, you did not excuse lies or destruction, for you upheld the Church and always said: Alleluia.

Ikos 6

Help us, most beloved deacon, to know and follow Christ, to be His faithful disciples, and not look back to the old self or acquiesce to worldly opinions. We beseech you to fortify us, Saint Stephen, that we may confess truth before various institutions which promote error and scorn salvation:

Rejoice, for you comprehended the ministry of the Lamb of God.

Rejoice, for you fathomed the truth about sin and redemption.

Rejoice, for you spread that which was sanctioned by the Church.

Rejoice, for you set aside any peculiar likes and dislikes.

Rejoice, for you related to everyone as made in the image of God.

Rejoice, for you desired the restoration of the beauty of that image.

Rejoice, for your life was an embodiment of wisdom and mercy.

Rejoice, for your courage emanated from your complete dedication.

Rejoice, for your ears listened to every word of the apostles.

Rejoice, for your eyes always focused on the Cross of Christ.

Rejoice, for your diaconate was void of self-inflation.

Rejoice, for your love of others exceeded all delusions of grandeur.

Rejoice, Saint Stephen, preacher of truth and first martyr of the Church.

Kontakion 7

We see that many in the synagogues were enraged over your preaching of Christ, for you overcame all their arguments. Therefore, they bribed false witnesses to accuse you of blasphemy against the law of Moses, and then they brought you before the high court where you said: Alleluia.

Ikos 7

Saint Stephen, you taught that Christ is the fulfillment of the law, and that God is not confined to one special temple or place, but that God is the Creator and everywhere present. God does not want the death of the sinner, but sent His Son to save Israel as well as the Gentiles:

Rejoice, for your knowledge of truth outshone every iota of dispute.

Rejoice, for your teaching highlighted the past as preparation.

Rejoice, for your words were judged blasphemous by obstinate authorities.

Rejoice, for your love of Christ was upsetting to their entrenched network.

Rejoice, for your intention was to bring everyone to truth and salvation.

Rejoice, for your desire was for the tender mercies of God.

Rejoice, for you recalled Abraham who obeyed God in Mesopotamia.

Rejoice, for you remembered Joseph who pleased God in Egypt.

Rejoice, for you proclaimed Moses who heard God in the burning bush.

Rejoice, for you affirmed God's Throne is in Heaven and not manmade.

Rejoice, for you witnessed of Christ Who is the fulfillment of the law.

Rejoice, for you upheld Jesus of Nazareth and the Son of God.

Rejoice, Saint Stephen, preacher of truth and first martyr of the Church.

Kontakion 8

It was your manner, Saint Stephen, not to become distressed when facing opposition but to rely on God for holy confidence. When you confronted the members of the synagogue on their disobedience to God and rejection of Christ, you rightly accused your accusers and said: Alleluia.

Ikos 8

Help us, most steadfast deacon, to speak and live by the truths of the Church, the same truths for which you and all the martyrs gave their lives, that we might honor you and also be granted eternal life. We implore you to guide us to spiritual maturity and bless us with daily fruitfulness:

Rejoice, for your faith could not be compromised or enfeebled.

Rejoice, for your love of the Church was profound and fruitful.

Rejoice, for your life had no substance except to live for Christ totally.

Rejoice, for your days were invested in His sacrifice wholeheartedly.

Rejoice, for your expressions of truth exposed the hypocrites.

Rejoice, for your reporting of history angered the self-satisfied.

Rejoice, for you prayed even though maligned and detained.

Rejoice, for you gave thanks to God for every occasion to spread truth.

Rejoice, for you put no limits on learning and teaching.

Rejoice, for you afforded everyone access to truth about self and God.

Rejoice, for you refused to let Satan control your mind.

Rejoice, for you denounced every suggestion of futility.

Rejoice, Saint Stephen, preacher of truth and first martyr of the Church.

Kontakion 9

It then happened, Saint Stephen, that the crowds became increasingly angry and wanted vengeance because you rebuked them. Like the sinful ones among their ancestors, their hearts were not moved to repentance but to rebellion. Yet, you kept to your holy convictions and said: Alleluia.

Ikos 9

Saint Stephen, you were full of the Holy Spirit, and you looked up into Heaven and saw Jesus Christ standing at

the right hand of God, for Christ is the Son of God and Very God of Very God. This was blasphemy to the crowds and authorities, but the truth and way of salvation for believers:

Rejoice, for your eyes saw truth, love, mercy, purity, salvation and unity.

Rejoice, for your service was validated by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Rejoice, for your reason for living was fulfilled beyond imagination.

Rejoice, for your hope of Heaven was on a course to triumph.

Rejoice, for your vision was that of splendor and righteousness.

Rejoice, for your declaration could not be withheld from mankind.

Rejoice, for you related with abiding and everlasting love.

Rejoice, for you rebuked but did not hate your critics.

Rejoice, for you believed in the total ministry and message of Christ.

Rejoice, for you cherished every word and act of truth as life-giving.

Rejoice, for you illuminated the land whether accepted or disowned.

Rejoice, for you looked to Heaven and not to the instigators of conflict.

Rejoice, Saint Stephen, preacher of truth and first martyr of the Church.

Kontakion 10

It was your manner, Saint Stephen, as a baptized Christian and also an appointed deacon, to follow Christ through joy and hardship, and to find joy within the spiritual potential of all difficulties. Therefore, when you were cast outside the city and stoned, you continued to say: Alleluia.

Ikos 10

Help us, most amazing deacon, to spread truth whether giving aid to the needy or under scrutiny by the authorities. Then, when death arrives, let no bitterness or resentment darken our perspective. May we not lose hope in our last moments, but surpass all forms of evil and be found faithful:

Rejoice, for you banned cynicism from your thoughts.

Rejoice, for you forbade discouragement to enter your feelings.

Rejoice, for you carried the Cross of Christ through a violent mob.

Rejoice, for you upheld the Church when assaulted by unbelievers.

Rejoice, for you were taken by force but feared no evil.

Rejoice, for you relinquished all judgment to God in Heaven.

Rejoice, for your commitment was firm from start to finish.

Rejoice, for your endurance was gracious and confident.

Rejoice, for your suffering paralleled the ways of the Savior.

Rejoice, for your soul found joy in knowing that He is Risen.

Rejoice, for your heart was filled with gratitude for salvation.

Rejoice, for your body was a temple of humility and purity.

Rejoice, Saint Stephen, preacher of truth and first martyr of the Church.

Kontakion 11

Finally, Saint Stephen, as you suffered the onslaught of stones, you called forth to God to receive your spirit and take you into Heaven. You also prayed, with a loud voice,

for the forgiveness of your persecutors. You then departed this life, while the saints in Heaven said: Alleluia.

Ikos 11

Saint Stephen, there was present at your martyrdom a man named Saul, a relative of yours, who supported your killing. He was therefore among those whom you asked God to pardon, and he, Saul, later became the Apostle Paul and chosen of God:

Rejoice, for you forgave those who killed you in the name of religion.

Rejoice, for you believed that God would overcome evil with goodness.

Rejoice, for you prayed to the very end of your righteous diaconate.

Rejoice, for you abided in Christ even as the stones were being thrown.

Rejoice, for you understood the ways of sacrificial love for others.

Rejoice, for you died so that people might learn truth and mercy.

Rejoice, for your execution planted seeds for the Church of Christ.

Rejoice, for your death caused truth to spread beyond Jerusalem.

Rejoice, for your forgiveness gave birth to the Apostle Paul.

Rejoice, for your martyrdom set a precedent for Christianity.

Rejoice, for your dedication was brought to vital completion.

Rejoice, for your finishing point gave continuance to truth.

Rejoice, Saint Stephen, preacher of truth and first martyr of the Church.

Kontakion 12

O God, You are truly marvelous in the lives of Your saints, in Your wonders and wisdom throughout time, and in Your edification and shaping of each generation of Christians. Thank You for the Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen, as we gather before all the holy martyrs and say: Alleluia.

Ikos 12

Saint Stephen, unbeknown to you on that day, the Theotokos and Saint John the Theologian were standing on a far rock. As they witnessed your dying for the sake of Christ, the Mother of God prayed for you. We also ask

for her holy prayers as we strive to emulate your steadfastness:

Rejoice, for you accomplished the will of God through His strength.

Rejoice, for you were faithful in small things and great.

Rejoice, for you sought the Kingdom with your very body and blood.

Rejoice, for you became the prototype martyr for all Christendom.

Rejoice, for you courageously stood by the teachings of the apostles.

Rejoice, for you are appreciated by those who stand on the rock of faith.

Rejoice, for your trust was in the God Who delivers not into evil.

Rejoice, for your hope was in the Son Who knows the Father.

Rejoice, for your love extends to everyone who needs forgiveness.

Rejoice, for your faith overarches the hungry and thirsty.

Rejoice, for your forgiveness aligns with that of Christ Himself.

Rejoice, for your cross is planted in the memory of the whole Church.

Rejoice, Saint Stephen, preacher of truth and first martyr of the Church.

Kontakion 13

Bless us, Saint Stephen, to begin each day in peace and goodwill, to learn of God and to become living icons of His truth and mercy. We pray before your holy icon, that you might impart to us a deeper faith in God and a greater capacity to do His will. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Alleluia. **(Repeat Kontakion 13 three times)** Copyright © 2018 by Natalia J. Garland

