

Martyr Mamas, of Caesarea in Cappadocia and his parents, Martyrs Theodotus and Rufina (September 2)



Holy Martyr Mamas, son of the eminent Christians Martyrs Theodotus and Rufina, was born in Paphlagonia. Because they openly confessed their Faith, Theodotus and Rufina were arrested and cast into prison in Caesarea of Cappadocia. Cognizant of his physical weakness, Theodotus prayed that the Lord might take him before he was tortured. The Lord heard Theodotus' prayer, and Theodotus died in prison. Thereafter, St. Rufina also died. Untimely separated from her son, she prayerfully entrusted him to God, asking Him to be Protector and Intercessor for the orphaned youth. God heeded St. Rufina's deathbed prayer. A wealthy Christian widow named Ammia interred the bodies of Saints Theodotus and Rufina with honor, and took the child to her home, where she lavished motherly care upon him.

St. Mamas grew up a committed Christian. Taking pains to see that he developed his natural abilities, his new mother enrolled him in school. The boy learned eagerly and with ease. He was discerning beyond his years and excelled in early maturity of mind and heart. Through learned speeches and by his personal example, the young Mamas turned many of his contemporaries to Christianity. Word of this was relayed to Governor Democritus, who had the youth arrested and brought to trial. Out of respect for Mamas' noble birth, Democritus was reluctant to subject him to torture, and instead sent him to Emperor Aurelius (270-275), who strove, first with pleasant words and then with threats, to turn St. Mamas toward paganism. However, all of his efforts were in vain. The Saint fearlessly confessed himself to be a Christian, and denounced the pagans for worshipping lifeless idols. The incensed emperor subjected the youth to cruel tortures. They attempted to drown the Saint, but an Angel of the Lord rescued Mamas and directed him to live on a high mountain in the desert not far from Caesarea. Submitting to the will of God, the Saint built a small church and set out on a life of strict asceticism, struggling in fasting and prayer.

Soon thereafter, he received amazing power over the forces of nature. The beasts of the surrounding desert would come to his dwelling and listen to the reading of the Holy Gospel. St. Mamas lived on the milk of wild goats and does.

The Saint was mindful of his neighbors' needs. From the milk, he made cheese, which he distributed to the poor without seeking remuneration. Soon all of Caesarea had heard of St. Mamas' God-pleasing manner of life. The ruler, troubled by this, sent a detachment of soldiers to seize him. They encountered St. Mamas on the mountain but did not recognize him, and instead took him to be a simple shepherd. The Saint invited them into his hut, gave them milk to drink, and then, knowing that martyrdom from Christ's sake awaited him, revealed his name to them. Offering himself up to the torturers, St. Mamas was tried before the local official Alexander, who subjected him to

intense and prolonged tortures. However, they were unable to break the Saint's Christian will. He gained strength from words from above, "Be resolute and brave, Mamas." Although the Saint was sentenced to be devoured by beasts, the beasts refused to touch him. Then one of the pagan priests stabbed him with a trident. Mortally wounded, St Mamas walked out of the town and in a little stone cave rendered up his soul to God, Who in everyone's hearing called Holy Martyr Mamas to the heavenly abode (+275). The faithful interred him at the place of his repose.

Soon thereafter, Christians began to receive from him grace-filled help with their illnesses and sorrows. In a public homily, the Holy Hierarch St. Basil the Great said of Holy Martyr Mamas: "Remember the Holy Martyr. Those who have seen him in visions, those living here who have him as their helper, those who have invoked his name and whom he has materially assisted, those errant ones whom he has set on the path of life, those whom he has healed of sicknesses, those whose children, already dead, he has returned to life, those whose life he has prolonged – all gather together and offer praise to the Martyr."